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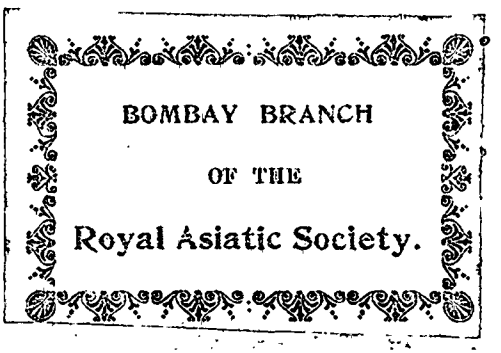

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THE

LITERARY CHARACTER;

OR

THE HISTORY

97870

OF

MEN OF GENIUS,

DRAWN FROM THEIR OWN FEELINGS AND CONFESSIONS.

BY I. D'ISRAELI.

FOURTH EDITION, REVISED.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1828.

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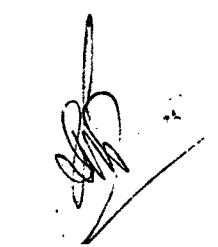

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We left the man of genius in the stillness of meditation. We have now to pursue his history through that more excited state which occurs in the most active operations of genius, and which the term *reverie* inadequately indicates. Metaphysical distinctions but ill describe it, and po-

pular language affords no terms for those faculties and feelings which escape the observation of the multitude who are not affected in the same degree by the phenomenon.

The illusion produced by a drama on persons of great sensibility, when all the senses are excited by a mixture of reality with imagination, is the effect experienced by men of genius in their own vivified ideal world. Real emotions are raised by fiction. In a scene, apparently passing in their presence, where the whole train of circumstances succeeds in all the continuity of nature, and where a sort of real existences appear to rise up before them, they themselves become spectators or actors. They feel their sympathies excited, and while the exterior organs of sense are visibly affected, they even break out into speech, and strengthen their speech with gestures.

In this equivocal state the enthusiast of genius produces his master-pieces. This waking dream is distinct from reverie, where our thoughts wandering without connexion, the faint impres-

sions are so evanescent as to occur without even being recollected. A day of *reverie* is beautifully painted by Rousseau as distinct from a day of *thinking*: "J'ai des journées delicieuses, errant sans souci, sans projet, sans affaire, de bois en bois, et de rocher en rocher, *revant toujours et ne pensant point.*" It is very different, however, when one closely pursued act of meditation carries the enthusiast of genius beyond the precinct of actual existence. The act of contemplation then creates the thing contemplated. He is now the busy actor in a world which he himself only views. Alone, he hears, he sees, he touches, he laughs, he weeps; his brows and lips, and his very limbs move.

Poets and even painters, who, as Lord Bacon describes witches, "are imaginative," have often involuntarily betrayed, in the act of composition, those gestures which accompany this enthusiasm. Witness DOMENICHINO enraging himself that he might portray anger. Nor were these creative gestures quite unknown to Quintilian, who has nobly compared them

to the lashings of the lion's tail, rousing him to combat. Actors of genius have accustomed themselves to walk on the stage for an hour before the curtain was drawn, that they might fill their minds with all the phantoms of the drama, and so suspend all communion with the external world. The great actress of our age, during representation, always had the door of her dressing-room open, that she might listen to, and if possible watch the whole performance, with the same attention as was experienced by the spectators. By this means she possessed herself of all the illusion of the scene; and when she herself entered on the stage, her dreaming thoughts then brightened into a vision, where the perceptions of the soul were as firm and clear as if she were really the Constance or the Katherine whom she only represented.

Aware of this peculiar faculty, so prevalent in the more vivid exercise of genius, Lord Kaimes seems to have been the first who, in a work on criticism, attempted to name *the ideal presence*, to distinguish it from the *real presence*

of things. It has been called the representative faculty, the imaginative state, and many other states and faculties. Call it what we will, no term opens to us the invisible mode of its operations, no metaphysical definition expresses its variable nature. Conscious of the existence of such a faculty, our critic perceived that the conception of it is by no means clear when described in words.

Has not the difference between an actual thing, and its image in a glass, perplexed some philosophers? and it is well known how far the ideal philosophy has been carried by so fine a genius as Bishop BERKLEY. "All are pictures, alike painted on the retina, or optical sensorium!" exclaimed the enthusiast BARRY, who only saw pictures in nature, and nature in pictures. This faculty has had a strange influence over the passionate lovers of statues. We find unquestionable evidence of the vividness of the representative faculty, or the ideal presence, vying with that of reality. Evelyn has described one of this cast of mind, in the librarian

of the Vatican, who haunted one of the finest collections at Rome. To these statues he would frequently talk as if they were living persons, often kissing and embracing them. A similar circumstance might be recorded of a man of distinguished talent and literature among ourselves. Wonderful stories are told of the amatorial passion for marble statues; but the wonder ceases, and the truth is established, when the irresistible ideal presence is known; which sufficiently explains the visions which now bless these lovers of statues, in the modern land of sculpture, Italy, as they once did in the ancient of Greece. "The last Judgment," the stupendous ideal presence of MICHAEL ANGELO, seems to have communicated itself to some of his beholders; "As I stood before this picture," a late traveller tells us, "my blood chilled as if the reality were before me, and the very sound of the trumpet seemed to pierce my ears."

Cold and barren tempers without imagination, whose impressions of objects never rise beyond those of memory and reflection, which know

only to compare, and not to excite, will smile at this equivocal state of the ideal presence; yet it is a real one to the enthusiast of genius, and it is his happiest and peculiar condition. Without this faculty, no metaphysical aid, no art to be taught him, no mastery of talent, will avail him; unblest with it, the votary will find each sacrifice lying cold on the altar, for no accepting flame from heaven shall kindle it.

This enthusiasm indeed can only be discovered by men of genius themselves, yet when most under its influence, they can least perceive it, as the eye which sees all things cannot view itself. Or rather such an attempt would be like searching for the principle of life, which were it found, would cease to be life. Could indeed the great romance writer of our times unfold to us the states of mind into which he has been so frequently thrown!—but from an enchanted man we must not expect a narrative of his enchantment; for if he could speak to us reasonably, and like one of ourselves, in that

case he would be a man in a state of disenchantment, and then would perhaps yield us no better account than we may trace by our own observations.

There is however something of reality in this state of the ideal presence; for the most familiar instances will show how the nerves of each external sense are put in motion by the idea of the object, as if the real object had been presented to it. The difference is only in the degree. The senses are more concerned in the ideal world than at first appears. The idea of a thing will make us shudder; and the bare imagination of it, will often produce a real pain. A curious consequence may be deduced from this principle: MILTON, lingering amidst the freshness of nature in Eden, felt all the delights of those elements which he was creating; his nerves moved with the images which excited them. The fierce and wild DANTE, amidst the abysses of his Inferno, must often have been startled by its horrors, and often left his bitter and gloomy spirit in the stings he inflicted on the great cri-

minal. The moveable nerves then of the man of genius are a reality; he sees, he hears, he feels by each. How mysterious to us is the operation of this faculty! A HOMER and a RICHARDSON,* like Nature, open a volume large as life itself—embracing a circuit of human existence! This state of the mind has even a reality in it for the generality of persons. In a romance or a drama tears are often seen in the eyes of the reader or the spectator, who, before they have time to recollect that the whole is fictitious, have been surprised for a moment by a strong conception of a present and existing scene.

Can we doubt of the reality of this faculty, when the visible and outward frame of the man of genius bears witness to its presence? When

* Richardson assembles a family about him, writing down what they said, seeing their very manner of saying, living with them as often and as long as he wills—with such a personal unity, that an ingenious lawyer once told me that he required no stronger evidence of a fact in any court of law than a circumstantial scene in Richardson.

FIELDING said, "I do not doubt but the most pathetic and affecting scenes have been writ with tears," he probably drew that discovery from an inverse feeling to his own. Fielding would have been gratified to have confirmed the observation by facts which never reached him. METASTASIO, in writing the ninth scene of the second act of his Olympiad, found himself suddenly moved—shedding tears. The imagined sorrows inspired real tears; and they afterwards proved contagious. Had our poet not perpetuated his surprise by an interesting sonnet, the circumstance had passed away with the emotion, as many such have. POPE could never read Priam's speech for the loss of his son, without tears, and frequently has been observed to weep over tender and melancholy passages. ALFIERI, the most energetic poet of modern times, having composed, without a pause, the whole of an act, noted in the margin—"Written under a paroxysm of enthusiasm, and while shedding a flood of tears." The impressions which the frame experiences in this state, leave deeper traces behind them than

those of reverie. A circumstance accidentally preserved, has informed us of the tremors of DRYDEN, after having written that ode,* which as he confessed he had pursued without the power of quitting it; but these tremors were not unusual with him—for in the preface to his Tales, he tells us, that "in translating Homer he found greater pleasure than in Virgil; but it was not a pleasure without pain; the continual agitation of the spirits must needs be a weakener to any constitution, especially in age, and many pauses are required for refreshment betwixt the heats."

We find METASTASIO, like others of the brotherhood, susceptible of this state, complaining of his sufferings during the poetical æstus. "When I apply with attention, the nerves of my sensorium are put into a violent tumult; I

* This famous and unparalleled ode was probably afterwards retouched; but Joseph Warton discovered in it the rapidity of the thoughts, and the glow and the expressiveness of the images; which are the certain marks of the *first sketch* of a master.

grow as red as a drunkard, and am obliged to quit my work." When BUFFON was absorbed on a subject which presented great objections to his opinions, he felt his head burn, and saw his countenance flushed; and this was a warning for him to suspend his attention. GRAY could never compose voluntarily; his genius resembled the armed apparition in Shakspeare's master tragedy. "He would not be commanded," as we are told by Mr. Mathias. When he wished to compose the Installation Ode, for a considerable time he felt himself without the power to begin it: a friend calling on him, GRAY flung open his door hastily, and in a hurried voice and tone, exclaiming in the first verse of that ode,

"Hence, avaunt! 'tis holy ground!"—

His friend started at the disordered appearance of the bard, whose orgasm had disturbed his very air and countenance.

Listen to one labouring with all the magic of the spell. Madame ROLAND has thus pow-

erfully described the ideal presence in her first readings of Telemachus and Tasso:—"My respiration rose, I felt a rapid fire colouring my face, and my voice changing had betrayed my agitation. I was Eucharis for Telemachus, and Erminia for Tancred. However, during this perfect transformation, I did not yet think that I myself was any thing, for any one: the whole had no connexion with myself. I sought for nothing around me; I was they; I saw only the objects which existed for them; it was a dream, without being awakened."

The description, which so calm and exquisite an investigator of taste and philosophy, as our sweet and polished REYNOLDS has given of himself at one of these moments, is too rare, not to be recorded in his own words. Alluding to the famous Transfiguration, our own RAFFAELLE says, "When I have stood looking at that picture from figure to figure, the eagerness, the spirit, the close unaffected attention of each figure to the principal action, my thoughts have carried me away, that I have

forgot myself; and for that time might be looked upon as an enthusiastic madman; for I could really fancy the whole action was passing before my eyes."

The effect which the study of Plutarch's illustrious men produced on the mighty mind of ALFIERI, during a whole winter, while he lived as it were among the heroes of antiquity, he has himself described. ALFIERI wept and raved with grief and indignation that he was born under a government which favoured no Roman heroes and sages. As often as he was struck with the great deeds of these great men, in his extreme agitation, he rose from his seat as one possessed. The feeling of genius in ALFIERI was suppressed for more than twenty years, by the discouragement of his uncle; but as the natural temperament cannot be crushed out of the soul of genius, he was a poet without writing a single verse; and as a great poet, the ideal presence at times became ungovernable, verging to madness. In traversing the wilds of Arragon, his emotions would certainly have

given birth to poetry, could he have expressed himself in verse. It was a complete state of the imaginative existence, or this ideal presence; for he proceeded along the wilds of Arragon in a reverie, weeping and laughing by turns. He considered this as a folly, because it ended in nothing but in laughter and tears. He was not aware that he was then yielding to a demonstration, could he have judged of himself, that he possessed those dispositions of mind and that energy of passion which form the poetical character.

Genius creates by a single conception; the statuary conceives the statue at once, which he afterwards executes by the slow process of art; and the architect contrives a whole palace in an instant. In a single principle, opening as it were on a sudden to genius, a great and new system of things is discovered. It has happened, sometimes, that this single conception, rushing over the whole concentrated spirit, has agitated the frame convulsively. It comes like a whispered secret from Nature. When MALEBRANCHE first

took up Descartes's Treatise on Man, the germ of his own subsequent philosophic system, such was his intense feeling, that a violent palpitation of the heart, more than once, obliged him to lay down the volume. When the first idea of the "Essay on the Arts and Sciences" rushed on the mind of ROUSSEAU, a feverish symptom in his nervous system approached to a slight delirium. Stopping under an oak, he wrote with a pencil the Prosopopeia of Fabricius.—"I still remember my solitary transport at the discovery of a philosophical argument against the doctrine of transubstantiation," exclaimed GIBBON in his Memoirs.

This quick sensibility of genius has suppressed the voices of poets in reciting their most pathetic passages.—THOMSON was so oppressed by a passage in Virgil or Milton, when he attempted to read, that "his voice sunk in ill-articulated sounds from the bottom of his breast." The tremulous figures of the ancient Sibyl appear to have been viewed in the land of the Muses, by the energetic description which

Paulus Jovius gives us, of the impetus and afflatus of one of the Italian improvisatori, some of whom, I have heard from one present at a similar exhibition, have not degenerated in poetic inspiration, nor in its corporeal excitement. "His eyes fixed downwards, kindle, as he gives utterance to his effusions, the moist drops flow down his cheeks, the veins of his forehead swell, and wonderfully his learned ear, as it were, abstracted and intent, moderates each impulse of his flowing numbers. *"

This enthusiasm throws the man of genius amidst Nature, into those reveries when, while the senses of other men are overcome at the appearance of destruction, he continues to view only Nature herself. The mind of PLINY, to add one more chapter to his mighty scroll, sought Nature amidst the volcano in which he perished. VERNET was on board a ship in

* The passage is curious.—"Canenti defixi exardent oculi, sudores manant, frontis venæ contumescunt, et quod mirum est, eruditæ aures, tanquam alienæ et intentæ, omnem impetum profluentium numerorum exactissimâ ratione moderantur."

the midst of a raging tempest, and all hope was given up. The astonished captain beheld the artist of genius, his pencil in his hand, in calm enthusiasm, sketching the terrible world of waters—studying the wave that was rising to devour him.

There is a tender enthusiasm in the elevated studies of antiquity. Then the ideal presence or the imaginative existence prevails, by its perpetual associations, or as the late Dr. Brown has perhaps more distinctly termed them, *suggestions.* "In contemplating antiquity, the mind itself becomes antique;" was finely observed by Livy, long ere our philosophy of the mind existed as a system. This rapture, or sensation of deep study, has been described by one whose imagination had strayed into the occult learning of antiquity, and in the hymns of Orpheus, it seemed to him that he had lifted the veil from Nature. His feelings were associated with her loneliness. I translate his words. "When I took these dark mystical hymns into my hands, I appeared as it were to be descending into an

abyss of the mysteries of venerable antiquity; at that moment, the world in silence and the stars and moon only, watching me." This enthusiasm is confirmed by Mr. Mathias, who applies this description to his own emotions on his first opening the manuscript volumes of the poet Gray on the philosophy of Plato; "and many a learned man," he adds, "will acknowledge as his own, the feelings of this animated scholar."

Amidst the monuments of great and departed nations, our imagination is touched by the grandeur of local impressions, and the vivid associations, or suggestions, of the manners, the arts, and the individuals, of a great people. The classical author of Anacharsis, when in Italy, would often suddenly stop as if overcome by his recollections. Amidst camps, temples, circuses, hippodromes, and public and private edifices, he as it were held an interior converse with the manes of those who seemed hovering about the capital of the old world; as if he had been a citizen of ancient Rome, travelling in the

modern. So men of genius have roved amidst the awful ruins till the ideal presence has fondly built up the city anew, and have become Romans in the Rome of two thousand years past. POMPONIUS LÆTUS, who devoted his life to this study, was constantly seen wandering amidst the vestiges of this "throne of the world." There, in many a reverie, as his eye rested on the mutilated arch and the broken column, abstracted and immoveable, he dropped tears in the ideal presence of Rome and of the Romans. Another enthusiast of this class was BOSIUS, who sought beneath Rome for another Rome, in those catacombs built by the early Christians, for their asylum and their sepulchre. His work of "Roma Sotteranea" is the production of a subterraneous life, passed in fervent and perilous labours. Taking with him a hermit's meal for the week, this new Pliny often descended into the bowels of the earth, by lamp-light, clearing away the sand and ruins, till a tomb broke forth, or an inscription became legible. Accompanied by some friend whom his enthusiasm had inspired,

with his own sympathy, here he dictated his notes, tracing the mouldering sculpture, and catching the fading picture. Thrown back into the primitive ages of Christianity, amidst the local impressions, the historian of the Christian catacombs collected the memorials of an age and of a race, which were hidden beneath the earth.

The same enthusiasm surrounds the world of science with that creating imagination which has startled even men of science by its peculiar discoveries. WERNER, the mineralogist, celebrated for his lectures, appears, by some accounts transmitted by his auditors, to have exercised this faculty. Werner often said that "he always depended on the muse for inspiration." His unwritten lecture was a reverie—till kindling in his progress, blending science and imagination in the grandeur of his conceptions, at times, as if he had gathered about him the very elements of nature, his spirit seemed to be hovering over the waters and the strata. With the same enthusiasm of science, CUVIER medi-

tated on some bones, and some fragments of bones, which could not belong to any known class of the animal kingdom. The philosopher dwelt on these animal ruins till he constructed numerous species which had disappeared from the globe. This sublime naturalist has ascertained and classified the fossil remains of animals whose existence can no longer be traced in the records of mankind. His own language bears testimony to the imagination which carried him on through a career so strange and wonderful. "It is a rational object of ambition in the mind of man, to whom only a short space of time is allotted upon earth, to have the glory of restoring the history of *thousands of ages which preceded the existence of his race, and of thousands of animals that never were contemporaneous with his species.*" Philosophy becomes poetry, and science imagination, in the enthusiasm of genius. Even in the practical part of a science, painful to the operator himself, Mr. Abernethy has declared, and eloquently declared, that this enthusiasm is absolutely re-

quisite. "We have need of enthusiasm, or some strong incentive, to induce us to spend our nights in study, and our days in the disgusting and health-destroying observation of human diseases, which alone can enable us to understand, alleviate, or remove them. On no other terms can we be considered as real students of our profession—to confer that which sick kings would fondly purchase with their diadem—that which wealth cannot purchase, nor state nor rank bestow—to alleviate the most insupportable of human afflictions." Such is the enthusiasm of the physiologist of genius, who elevates the demonstrations of anatomical inquiries by the cultivation of the intellectual faculties, connecting "man with the common Master of the universe."

This enthusiasm inconceivably fills the mind of genius in all great and solemn operations. It is an agitation amidst calmness, and is required not only in the fine arts, but wherever a great and continued exertion of the soul must be employed. The great ancients, who, if they

were not always philosophers, were always men of genius, saw, or imagined they saw a divinity within the man. This enthusiasm is alike experienced in the silence of study and amidst the roar of cannon, in painting a picture, or in scaling a rampart. View DE THOU, the historian, after his morning prayers, imploring the Divinity to purify his heart from partiality and hatred, and to open his spirit in developing the truth, amidst the contending factions of his times; and HAYDN, employed in his "Creation," earnestly addressing the Creator ere he struck his instrument. In moments like these, man becomes a perfect unity—one thought and one act, abstracted from all other thoughts and all other acts. This intensity of the mind was felt by GRAY in his loftiest excursions, and is perhaps the same power which impels the villager, when, to overcome his rivals in a contest for leaping, he retires back some steps, collects all exertion into his mind, and clears the eventful bound. One of our admirals in the

reign of Elizabeth, held as a maxim, that a height of passion, amounting to phrensy, was necessary to qualify a man for the command of a fleet; and NELSON, decorated by all his honours about him, on the day of battle, at the sight of those emblems of glory emulated himself. This enthusiasm was necessary for his genius. It made it effective.

But this enthusiasm, prolonged as it often has been by the operation of the imaginative existence, becomes a state of perturbed feeling, and can only be distinguished from a disordered intellect by the power of volition possessed by a sound mind of withdrawing from the ideal world into the world of sense. It is but a step which may carry us from the wanderings of fancy into the aberrations of delirium. The endurance of attention, even in minds of the highest order, is limited by a law of nature; and when thinking is goaded on to exhaustion, confusion of ideas ensues, as straining any one of our limbs by excessive exertion produces tremor and torpor.

" With curious art the brain too finely wrought
Preys on herself, and is destroy'd by Thought;
Constant attention wears the active mind,
Blots out her powers, and leaves a blank behind—
The greatest genius to this fate may bow."

Even minds less susceptible than high genius, may become overpowered by their imagination. Often in the deep silence around us, we seek to relieve ourselves by some voluntary noise or action which may direct our attention to an exterior object, and bring us back to the world, which we had, as it were, left behind us. The circumstance is sufficiently familiar; as well as another; that whenever we are absorbed in profound contemplation, a startling noise scatters the spirits, and painfully agitates the whole frame. The nerves are then in a state of the utmost relaxation. There may be an agony in thought which only deep thinkers experience. The terrible effect of metaphysical studies on BEATTIE, has been told by himself. " Since the Essay on Truth was printed in quarto, I have never *dared* to read it over. I durst not even read the sheets to see whether there were

any errors in the print, and was obliged to get a friend to do that office for me. These studies came in time to have dreadful effects upon my nervous system; and I cannot read what I then wrote without some degree of horror, because it recalls to my mind the horrors that I have sometimes felt after passing a long evening in those severe studies."

GOLDONI, after a rash exertion of writing sixteen plays in a year, confesses he paid the penalty of the folly. He flew to Genoa, leading a life of delicious vacuity. To pass the day without doing any thing, was all the enjoyment he was now capable of feeling. But long after he said, "I felt at that time, and have ever since continued to feel, the consequence of that exhaustion of spirits I sustained in composing my sixteen comedies."

The enthusiasm of study was experienced by POPE in his self-education, and once it clouded over his fine intellect. It was the severity of his application which distorted his body, and he then partook of a calamity incidental to the

family of genius, for he sunk into that state of exhaustion which SMOLLET experienced during half a year, called a *coma vigil*, an affection of the brain, where the principle of life is so reduced, that all external objects appear to be passing in a dream. BOERHAAVE has related of himself, that having imprudently indulged in intense thought on a particular subject, he did not close his eyes for six weeks after; and Tissot, in his work on the health of men of letters, abounds in similar cases, where a complete stupor has affected the unhappy student for a period of six months.

Assuredly the finest geniuses have not always the power to withdraw themselves from that intensely interesting train of ideas, which we have shown has not been removed from about them by even the violent stimuli of exterior objects; and the scenical illusion which then occurs, has been called the *hallucinatio studiosa*, or false ideas in reverie. Such was the state in which PETRARCH found himself in that minute narrative of a vision in which Laura appeared to

him; and TASSO in the lofty conversations he held with a spirit that glided towards him on the beams of the sun. In this state was Malebranche listening to the voice of God within him; and Lord HERBERT, when, to know whether he should publish his book, he threw himself on his knees, and interrogated the Deity in the stillness of the sky. And thus PASCAL started at times at a fiery gulf opening by his side. SPINELLO having painted the fall of the rebellious angels, had so strongly imagined the illusion, and more particularly the terrible features of Lucifer, that he was himself struck with such horror as to have been long afflicted with the presence of the demon to which his genius had given birth. The influence of the same ideal presence operated on the religious painter ANGELONI, who could never represent the sufferings of Jesus without his eyes overflowing with tears. DESCARTES, when young, and in a country seclusion, his brain exhausted with meditation, and his imagination heated to excess, heard a voice in the air which called

him to pursue the search of truth; nor did he doubt the vision, and this delirious dreaming of genius charmed him even in his after-studies. Our COLLINS and COWPER were often thrown into that extraordinary state of mind, when the ideal presence converts us into visionaries; and their illusions were as strong as Swedenburgh's, who saw a terrestrial heaven in the glittering streets of his New Jerusalem; or JACOB BEHMEN'S, who listened to a celestial voice till he beheld the apparition of an angel; or CARDAN'S, when he so carefully observed a number of little armed men at his feet; or BENVENUTO CELLINI'S, whose vivid imagination and glorious egotism so frequently contemplated "a resplendent light hovering over his shadow."

Such minds identified themselves with their visions! If we pass them over by asserting that they were insane, we are only cutting the knot which we cannot untie. We have no right to deny what some maintain, that a sympathy of the corporeal with the incorporeal nature of man, his imaginative with his physical existence, is

an excitement which appears to have been experienced by persons of a peculiar organization, and which metaphysicians in despair must resign to the speculations of enthusiasts themselves, though metaphysicians reason about phenomena far removed from the perceptions of the eye. The historian of the mind cannot omit an unquestionable, however incomprehensible a fact. According to our own conceptions, this state seems to produce a strange mysterious personage: a concentration of a human being within himself, endowed with inward eyes, ears which listen to interior sounds, and invisible hands touching impalpable objects, for whatever they act or however they are acted on, as far as respects ourselves all must have passed within their own minds. The platonic Dr. More flattered himself, that he was an enthusiast without enthusiasm, which seems but a suspicious state of convalescence. "I must ingenuously confess," he says, "that I have a natural touch of enthusiasm in my complection, but such as I thank God was ever governable enough, and have

found at length perfectly subduable. In virtue of which victory I know better what is in enthusiasts than they themselves; and therefore, was able to write with life and judgment, and shall I hope contribute not a little to the peace and quiet of this kingdom thereby." Thus far one of its votaries, and all that he vaunts to have acquired by this mysterious faculty of enthusiasm is the having rendered it "at length perfectly subduable." Yet those who have written on "Mystical devotion," have declared, that "It is a sublime state of mind to which whole sects have aspired, and some individuals appear to have attained."* The histories of great visionaries, were they correctly detailed, would probably prove how their delusions consisted of the ocular *spectra* of their brain and the accelerated sensations of their nerves. Bayle has conjured up an amusing theory of apparitions, to

* Mr. Charles Butler has drawn up a sensible essay on "Mystical Devotion." Norris, and Dr. Henry More, and Bishop Berkley may be consulted by the curious.

show that HOBBES, who was subject to occasional terrors, might fear that a certain combination of atoms agitating his brain might so disorder his mind as to expose him to spectral visions; and so being very timid, and distrusting his own imagination, he was averse at times to be left alone. Apparitions often happen in dreams, but they may happen to a man when awake, for reading and hearing of them would revive their images, and these images might play, even an incredulous philosopher, some unlucky trick.

But men of genius whose enthusiasm has not been past recovery, have experienced this extraordinary state of the mind, in those exhaustions of study to which they unquestionably are subject. Tissot, on "The Health of Men of Letters," has produced a terrifying number of cases. They see and hear what none but themselves do. Genius thrown into this peculiar state, has produced some noble effusions. KOTZEBUE was once absorbed in hypochondriacal melancholy, and appears to have meditated

on self-destruction; but it happened, that he preserved his habit of dramatic composition, and produced one of his most energetic dramas —that of "Misanthropy and Repentance." He tells us, that he had never experienced such a rapid flow of thoughts and images, and he believed, what a physiological history would perhaps show, that there are some maladies, those of the brain and the nerves, which actually stretch the powers of the mind beyond their usual reach. It is the more vivid world of ideal existence!

But what is more evident, men of the finest genius have experienced these hallucinations in society acting on their moral habits. They have insulated the mind. With them ideas have become realities, and suspicions certainties; while events have been noted down as seen and heard which in truth had never occurred. ROUSSEAU's phantoms scarcely ever quitted him for a day. BARRY imagined that he was invisibly persecuted by the Royal Academy, who had even spirited up a gang of housebreakers. The

vivid memoirs of ALFIERI will authenticate what DONNE, who himself had suffered from them, calls "these eclipses, sudden offuscations and darkening of the senses." Too often the man of genius, with a vast and solitary power, darkens the scene of life; he builds a pyramid between himself and the sun. Mocking at the expedients by which society has contrived to protect its feebleness, he would break down the institutions from which he has shrunk away in the loneliness of his feelings. Such is the insulating intellect to which some of the most elevated spirits have been reduced. To imbue ourselves with the genius of their works, even to think of them, is an awful thing! In nature their existence is a solecism, as their genius is a paradox; for their crimes seem to be without guilt, their curses have kindness in them, and if they afflict mankind it is in sorrow.

Yet what less than enthusiasm is the purchase-price of high passion and invention? Perhaps never has there been a man of genius of this rare cast, who has not betrayed the

ebullitions of imagination in some outward action, at that period when the illusions of life are more real to genius than its realities. There is a *fata morgana*, that throws into the air a pictured land, and the believing eye trusts till the visionary hues fade away. A slight derangement of our accustomed habits, a little perturbation of the faculties, and a romantic tinge on the feelings, give no indifferent promise of genius; of that generous temper which knowing nothing of the baseness of mankind, with indefinite views carries on some glorious design to charm the world or to make it happier. Often we hear, from the confessions of men of genius, of their having when boys indulged the most elevating and the most chimerical projects; and if age ridicule the imaginative existence of its youth, be assured that it is the decline of its genius. That virtuous and tender enthusiast, FENELON, in his early youth, troubled his friends with a classical and religious reverie. He was on the point of quitting them to restore the independence of Greece,

with the piety of a missionary, and with the taste of a classical antiquary. The Peloponnesus opened to him the church of Corinth where St. Paul preached, the Piræus where Socrates conversed; while the latent poet was to pluck laurels from Delphi, and rove amidst the amenities of Tempe. Such was the influence of the ideal presence! and barren will be his imagination, and luckless his fortune, who, claiming the honours of genius, has never been touched by such a temporary delirium.

To this enthusiasm, and to this alone, can we attribute the self-immolation of men of genius. Mighty and laborious works have been pursued, as a forlorn hope, at the certain destruction of the fortune of the individual. Vast labours attest the enthusiasm which accompanied their progress. Such men have sealed their works with their blood: they have silently borne the pangs of disease; they have barred themselves from the pursuits of fortune; they have torn themselves away from all they loved in life, patiently suffering these self-denials, to

escape from interruptions and impediments to their studies. Martyrs of literature and art, they behold in their solitude the halo of immortality over their studious heads—that fame which is "a life beyond life." VAN HELMONT in his library and his laboratory, preferred their busy solitude to the honours and the invitations of Rodolphus II., there writing down what he daily experienced during thirty years; nor would the enthusiast yield up to the emperor one of those golden and visionary days! MILTON would not desist from proceeding with one of his works, although warned by the physician of the certain loss of his sight. He declared he preferred his duty to his eyes, and doubtless his fame to his comfort. ANTHONY WOOD, to preserve the lives of others, voluntarily resigned his own to cloistered studies; nor did the literary passion desert him in his last moments, when with his dying hands the hermit of literature still grasped his beloved papers, and his last mortal thoughts dwelt on his Athenæ Oxonienses. MORERI, the founder

of our great biographical collections, conceived the design with such enthusiasm, and found such seduction in the labour, that he willingly withdrew from the popular celebrity he had acquired as a preacher, and the preferment which a minister of state, in whose house he resided, would have opened to his views. After the first edition of his Historical Dictionary, he had nothing so much at heart as its improvement. His unyielding application was converting labour into death; but collecting his last renovated vigour, with his dying hands he gave the volume to the world, though he did not live to witness even its publication. All objects in life appeared mean to him compared with that exalted delight of addressing to the literary men of his age, the history of their brothers. Such are the men, as BACON says of himself, who are "the servants of posterity,"

"Who scorn delights, and love laborious days!"

The same enthusiasm inspires the pupils of art consumed by their own ardour. The young

and classical sculptor who raised the statue of Charles II. placed in the centre of the Royal Exchange, was, in the midst of his work, advised by his medical friends to desist; for the energy of his labour, with the strong excitement of his feelings, already had made fatal inroads in his constitution: but he was willing, he said, to die at the foot of his statue. The statue was raised, and the young sculptor, with the shining eye and hectic flush of consumption, beheld it there —returned home—and died. DROUAIS, a pupil of David, the French painter, was a youth of fortune, but the solitary pleasure of his youth was his devotion to Raphael; he was at his studies from four in the morning till night. "Painting or nothing!" was the cry of this enthusiast of elegance; "First fame, then amusement," was another. His sensibility was great as his enthusiasm; and he cut in pieces the picture for which David declared he would inevitably obtain the prize. "I have had my reward in your approbation; but next year I shall feel more certain of deserving it," was the

reply of this young enthusiast. Afterwards he astonished Paris with his Marius; but while engaged on a subject which he could never quit, the principle of life itself was drying up in his veins. HENRY HEADLEY and KIRKE WHITE were the early victims of the enthusiasm of study, and are mourned by the few who are organised like themselves.

"'Twas thine own genius gave the final blow,
And help'd to plant the wound that laid thee low;
So the struck eagle, stretch'd upon the plain
No more through rolling clouds to soar again.
View'd his own feather on the fatal dart,
And wing'd the shaft that quiver'd in his heart;
Keen were his pangs, but keener far to feel
He nursed the pinion which impell'd the steel,
While the same plumage that had warm'd his nest,
Drank the last life-drop of his bleeding breast."

One of our former great students, when reduced in health by excessive study, was entreated to abandon it, and in the scholastic language of the day, not to *perdere substantiam propter accidentia*. With a smile, the martyr of study repeated a verse from Juvenal;

Nec propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.
No! not for life lose that for which I live!

Thus the shadow of death falls among those who are existing with more than life about them. Yet "there is no celebrity for the artist," said GESNER, "if the love of his own art do not become a vehement passion; if the hours he employs to cultivate it be not for him the most delicious ones of his life; if study become not his true existence and his first happiness; if the society of his brothers in art be not that which most pleases him; if even in the night-time the ideas of his art do not occupy his vigils or his dreams; if in the morning he fly not to his work, impatient to recommence what he left unfinished. These are the marks of him who labours for true glory and posterity; but if he seek only to please the taste of his age, his works will not kindle the desires, nor touch the hearts of those who love the arts and the artists."

Unaccompanied by enthusiasm, genius will produce nothing but uninteresting works of art;

not a work of art resembling the dove of Archytas, which other artists beheld flying, but who could not make another dove to meet it in the air. Enthusiasm is that secret and harmonious spirit which hovers over the production of genius, throwing the reader of a book, or the spectator of a statue, into the very ideal presence whence these works have really originated. A great work always leaves us in a state of musing.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of the Jealousy of Genius.—Jealousy often proportioned to the degree of genius.—A perpetual fever among Authors and Artists.—Instances of its incredible excess, among brothers and benefactors.—Of a peculiar species, where the fever consumes the sufferer, without its malignancy.

JEALOUSY, long supposed to be the offspring of little minds, is not, however confined to them. In the literary republic, the passion fiercely rages among the senators, as well as among the people. In that curious self-description which LINNÆUS comprised in a single page, written with the precision of a naturalist, that great man discovered that his constitution was liable to be afflicted with jealousy. Literary jealousy seems often proportioned to the degree of genius, and the shadowy and equivocal claims of

literary honour is the real cause of this terrible fear; for in cases where the object is more palpable and definite than intellectual excellence, jealousy does not appear so strongly to affect the claimant for admiration. The most beautiful woman, in the season of beauty, is more haughty than jealous; she rarely encounters a rival; and while her claims exist, who can contend with a fine feature or a dissolving glance? But a man of genius has no other existence than in the opinion of the world; a divided empire would obscure him, and a contested one might prove his annihilation.

The lives of authors and artists exhibit a most painful disease in that jealousy which is the perpetual fever of their existence. Why does PLATO never mention XENOPHON, and why does XENOPHON inveigh against PLATO, studiously collecting every little rumour which may detract from his fame? They wrote on the same subject! The studied affectation of ARISTOTLE, to differ from the doctrines of his master PLATO while he was following them, led him into ambiguities, and contradictions

which have been remarked. The two fathers of our poetry, CHAUCER and GOWER, suffered their friendship to be interrupted towards the close of their lives. Chaucer bitterly reflects on his friend for the indelicacy of some of his tales, "Of all such *cursed stories* I say fy!" and Gower, evidently in return, erased those verses in praise of his friend which he had inserted in the first edition of his "Confessio Amantis." Why did CORNEILLE, tottering to the grave, when RACINE consulted him on his first tragedy, advise the author never to write another? Why does VOLTAIRE continually detract from the sublimity of Corneille, the sweetness of Racine, and the fire of Crebillon? Why did DRYDEN never speak of OTWAY with kindness but when in his grave, then acknowledging that Otway excelled him in the pathetic? Why did LEIBNITZ speak slightingly of LOCKE's Essay, and meditate on nothing less than the complete overthrow of NEWTON's system? Why, when Boccaccio sent to PETRARCH a copy of DANTE, declaring that the work was like a first light which had illuminated his mind,

did Petrarch coldly observe that he had not been anxious to inquire after it, for intending himself to compose in the vernacular idiom, he had no wish to be considered as a plagiary ; and he only allows Dante's superiority from having written in the vulgar idiom, which he did not consider an enviable, but an inferior merit. Thus frigidly Petrarch could behold the solitary Ætna before him, in the " Inferno," while he shrunk into himself with the painful consciousness of the existence of another poet, who obscured his own majesty. It is curious to observe Lord SHAFTESBURY treating with the most acrimonious contempt the great writers of his own times, Cowley, Dryden, Addison, and Prior. We cannot imagine that his lordship was so entirely destitute of every feeling of wit and genius as would appear by this damnatory criticism on all the wit and genius of his age. It is not, indeed, difficult to comprehend a different motive for this extravagant censure in the jealousy, which even a great writer often experiences when he comes in contact with his living rivals, and when he hardily, if not impudently

practises those arts of critical detraction to raise a moment's delusion, which can gratify no one but himself.

The moral sense has often been found too weak to temper the malignancy of literary jealousy, and has impelled some men of genius to an incredible excess. A memorable example offers in the history of the two brothers, Dr. William, and John HUNTER, both great characters fitted to be rivals; but Nature, it was imagined, in the tenderness of blood, had placed a bar to rivalry. John, without any determined pursuit in his youth, was received by his brother at the height of his celebrity; the Doctor initiated him into his school; they performed their experiments together; and William Hunter was the first to announce to the world the great genius of his brother. After this close connexion in all their studies and discoveries, Dr. William Hunter published his magnificent work—the proud favourite of his heart, the assertor of his fame. Was it credible that the genius of the celebrated anatomist, which had

been nursed under the wing of his brother, should turn on that wing to clip it? John Hunter put in his claim to the chief discovery; it was answered by his brother. The Royal Society, to whom they appealed, concealed the documents of this unnatural feud. The blow was felt, and the jealousy of literary honour for ever separated the brothers—the brothers of genius.

Such, too, was the jealousy which separated Agostino and Annibal CARRACCI, whom their cousin Ludovico for so many years had attempted to unite, and who, during the time their academy existed, worked together, combining their separate powers. The learning and the philosophy of Agostino assisted the invention of the master genius Annibal; but Annibal was jealous of the more literary and poetical character of Agostino, and, by his sarcastic humour, frequently mortified his learned brother. Alike great artists, when once employed on the same work, Agostino was thought to have excelled his brother. Annibal, sullen

and scornful, immediately broke with him, and their patron, Cardinal Farnese, was compelled to separate the brothers. Their fate is striking; Agostino, divided from his brother Annibal, sunk into dejection and melancholy, and perished by a premature death, while Annibal closed his days not long after in a state of distraction. The brothers of Nature and Art could not live together, and could not live separate.

The history of artists abounds with instances of jealousy, perhaps more than that of any other class of men of genius. HUDSON, the master of REYNOLDS, could not endure the sight of his rising pupil, and would not suffer him to conclude the term of his apprenticeship; while even the mild and elegant REYNOLDS himself became so jealous of WILSON, that he took every opportunity of depreciating his singular excellence. Stung by the madness of jealousy, BARRY one day addressing Sir Joshua on his lectures, burst out, "Such poor flimsy stuff as your Discourses!" clenching his fist in the

agony of the convulsion. After the death of the great artist, BARRY bestowed on him the most ardent eulogium, and deeply grieved over the past. But the race of genius born too "near the sun," have found their increased sensibility flame into crimes of a deeper die—crimes attesting the treachery, and the violence of the professors of an art, which, it appears, in softening the souls of others, does not necessarily mollify those of the artists themselves. The dreadful story of ANDREA DEL CASTAGNO seems not doubtful. Having been taught the discovery of painting in oil by Domenico Venetiano, yet, still envious of the merit of the generous friend who had confided that great secret to him, Andrea, with his own hand, secretly assassinated him, that he might remain without a rival. The horror of his crime only appeared in his confession on his death-bed. DOMENICHINO seems to have been poisoned for the preference he obtained over the Neapolitan artists, which raised them to a man against him, and reduced him to the necessity of preparing his food with

his own hand. On his last return to Naples, Passeri says, "*Non fu mai più veduto da buon occhio da quelli Napoletani: e li Pittori lo detestavano perchè egli era ritornato—morì con qualche sospetto di veleno, e questo non è inverisimile perchè l'interesso è un perfido tiranno.*" So that the Neapolitans honoured Genius at Naples by poison, which they might have forgotten had it flourished at Rome. The famous cartoon of the battle of Pisa, a work of Michael Angelo, which he produced in a glorious competition with the Homer of painting, Leonardo da Vinci, and in which he had struck out the idea of a new style, is only known by a print which has preserved the wonderful composition; for the original, it is said, was cut into pieces by the mad jealousy of BACCIO BANDINELLI, whose whole life was made miserable by his consciousness of a superior rival.

In the jealousy of genius, however, there is a peculiar case where the fever silently consumes the sufferer, without possessing the malignant character of the disease. Even the gentlest

temper declines under its slow wastings, and this infection may happen among dear friends, whenever a man of genius loses that self-opinion which animates his solitary labours and constitutes his happiness. Perhaps, when at the height of his class, he suddenly views himself eclipsed by another genius—and that genius his friend! This is the jealousy, not of hatred, but of despair. Churchill observed the feeling, but probably included in it a greater degree of malignancy than I would now describe.

> "Envy which turns pale
> And sickens even if a friend prevail."

SWIFT, in that curious poem on his own death, said of POPE, that

> "——He can in one couplet fix,
> More sense than I can do in six."

The Dean, perhaps, is not quite serious, but probably is in the next lines.

> "It gives me such a jealous fit,
> I cry, 'Pox take him and his wit.'"

If the reader pursue this hint throughout the poem, these compliments to his friends, always at his own expense, exhibit a singular mixture of the sensibility and the frankness of true genius, which Swift himself has honestly confessed.

> "What poet would not grieve to see
> His brother write as well as he?"

ADDISON experienced this painful and mixed emotion in his intercourse with POPE, to whose rising celebrity he soon became too jealously alive. It was more tenderly, but not less keenly felt by the Spanish artist CASTILLO, a man distinguished by every amiable disposition. He was the great painter of Seville; but when some of his nephew MURILLO's paintings were shown to him, he stood in meek astonishment before them, and turning away, he exclaimed with a sigh, *Yà murio Castillo!* Castillo is no more! Returning home the stricken genius relinquished his pencil, and pined away in hopelessness. The same occurrence happened to PIETRO PERUGINO, the master of Raphael, whose general

character as a painter was so entirely eclipsed by his far renowned scholar; yet, while his real excellencies in the ease of his attitudes, and the mild grace of his female countenances have been passed over, it is probable that Raphael himself might have caught from them his first feelings of ideal beauty.

CHAPTER XIV.

Want of mutual esteem, among men of genius, often originates in a deficiency of analogous ideas.—It is not always envy or jealousy which induces men of genius to undervalue each other.

AMONG men of genius, that want of mutual esteem, usually attributed to envy or jealousy, often originates in a deficiency of analogous ideas, or of sympathy, in the parties. On this principle several curious phenomena in the history of genius may be explained.

Every man of genius has a manner of his own; a mode of thinking and a habit of style, and usually decides on a work as it approximates or varies from his own. When one great author depreciates another, his depreciation has often no worse source than his own taste. The witty Cowley despised the natural Chaucer; the austere classical Boileau the rough sublimity of

Crebillon; the refining Marivaux the familiar Molière. Fielding ridiculed Richardson, whose manner so strongly contrasted with his own; and Richardson contemned Fielding, and declared he would not last. Cumberland escaped a fit of unforgiveness, not living to read his own character by Bishop Watson, whose logical head tried the lighter elegancies of that polished man by his own nervous genius, which was destitute of every thing beautiful in taste. There was no envy in the breast of Johnson when he advised Mrs. Thrale not to purchase Gray's Letters as trifling and dull, no more than there was in Gray himself when he sunk the poetical character of Shenstone, and debased his simplicity and purity of feeling, by an image of ludicrous contempt. I have heard that WILKES, a mere wit and elegant scholar, used to treat GIBBON as a mere bookmaker; and applied to that philosophical historian the verse by which Voltaire described, with so much caustic facetiousness, the genius of the Abbé Trablet;

"Il a compilé, compilé, compilé."

The deficient sympathy in these men of genius for modes of feeling opposite to their own was the real cause of their opinions; and thus it happens that even superior genius is so often liable to be unjust and false in its decisions.

The same principle operates still more strikingly in the remarkable contempt of men of genius for those pursuits and their pursuers, which require talents quite distinct from their own, and a cast of mind thrown by nature into another mould. Hence we must not be surprised at the poetical antipathies of Selden and Locke, as well as Longuerue and Buffon. Newton called "poetry, ingenious nonsense." On the other side, poets undervalue the pursuits of the antiquary, the naturalist, and the metaphysician, forming their estimate by their own favourite scale of imagination. As we can only understand in the degree we comprehend, and feel in the degree in which we sympathise, we may be sure that in both these cases the parties will be found altogether deficient in those qua-

lities of genius which constitute the excellence of the other. To this cause, rather than to the one the friends of MICKLE attributed to Adam Smith, namely, a personal dislike to the poet, may we ascribe the severe mortification which the unfortunate translator of Camoens suffered from the person to whom he dedicated "The Lusiad." The Duke of Buccleugh was the pupil of the great political economist, and so little valued an epic poem, that his grace had not even the curiosity to open the leaves of the presentation-copy.

A professor of polite literature condemned the study of botany, as adapted to mediocrity of talent, and only demanding patience; but Linnæus showed how a man of genius becomes a creator even in a science which seems to depend only on order and method. It will not be a question with some whether a man must be endowed with the energy and aptitude of genius, to excel in antiquarianism, in natural history, and similar pursuits. The prejudices raised against the claims of such to the honours of

genius have probably arisen from the secluded nature of their pursuits, and the little knowledge which the men of wit and imagination possess of these persons, who live in a society of their own. On this subject a very curious circumstance has been revealed respecting PEIRESC, whose enthusiasm for science was long felt throughout Europe. His name was known in every country, and his death was lamented in forty languages; yet was this great literary character unknown to several men of genius in his own country; Rochefoucauld declared he had never heard of his name, and Malherbe wondered why his death created so universal a sensation.

Madame DE STAEL was an experienced observer of the habits of the literary character, and she has remarked how one student usually revolts from the other when *their occupations are different*, because they are a reciprocal annoyance. The scholar has nothing to say to the poet, the poet to the naturalist; and even among men of science, those who are differently

occupied avoid each other, taking no interest in what is out of their own circle. Thus we see the classes of literature, like the planets, revolving as distinct worlds; and it would not be less absurd for the inhabitants of Venus to treat with contempt the powers and faculties of those of Jupiter, than it is for the men of wit and imagination, those of the men of knowledge and curiosity. The wits are incapable of exerting the peculiar qualities which give a real value to these pursuits, and therefore they must remain ignorant of their nature and their result.

It is not then always envy or jealousy which induce men of genius to undervalue each other; the want of sympathy will sufficiently account for the want of judgment. Suppose NEWTON, QUINAULT, and MACHIAVEL, accidentally meeting together, and unknown to each other,—would they not soon have desisted from the vain attempt of communicating their ideas? The philosopher would have condemned the poet of the Graces as an intolerable trifler, and

the author of "The Prince" as a dark political spy. Machiavel would have conceived Newton to be a dreamer among the stars, and a mere almanack-maker among men; and the other a rhymer, nauseously *doucereux*. Quinault might have imagined he was seated between two madmen. Having annoyed each other for some time, they would have relieved their ennui by reciprocal contempt, and each have parted with a determination to avoid henceforward two such disagreeable companions.

CHAPTER XV.

Self-praise of genius.—The love of praise instinctive in the nature of genius.—A high opinion of themselves necessary for their great designs.—The Ancients openly claimed their own praise—And several Moderns.—An author knows more of his merits than his readers—And less of his defects.—Authors versatile in their admiration and their malignity.

VANITY, egotism, a strong sense of their own sufficiency, form another accusation against men of genius; but the complexion of self-praise must alter with the occasion; for the simplicity of truth may appear vanity, and the consciousness of superiority seem envy—to Mediocrity. It is we who do nothing, and cannot even imagine any thing to be done, who are so much displeased with self-lauding, self-love, self-independence, self-admiration, which with the man

of genius may often be nothing but an ostensible modification of the passion of glory.

He who exults in himself is at least in earnest; but he who refuses to receive that praise in public for which he has devoted so much labour in his privacy, is not: for he is compelled to suppress the very instinct of his nature. We censure no man for loving fame, but only for showing us how much he is possessed by the passion: thus we allow him to create the appetite, but we deny him aliment. Our effeminate minds are the willing dupes of what is called the modesty of genius, or, as it has been termed, "the polished reserve of modern times;" and this from the selfish principle that it serves at least to keep out of the company its painful pre-eminence. But this "polished reserve," like something as fashionable, the ladies' rouge, at first appearing with rather too much colour, will in the heat of an evening die away till the true complexion come out. What subterfuges are resorted to by these modest men of genius, to extort that praise from their private

circle which is thus openly denied them! They have been taken by surprise, enlarging their own panegyric, which might rival Pliny's on Trajan, for care and copiousness; or impudently veiling themselves with the transparency of a third person; or never prefixing their name to the volume, which they would not easily forgive a friend to pass unnoticed.

Self-love is a principle of action; but among no class of human beings has Nature so profusely distributed this principle of life and action as through the whole sensitive family of genius. It reaches even to a feminine susceptibility. The love of praise is instinctive in their nature. Praise with them is the evidence of the past and the pledge of the future. The generous qualities and the virtues of a man of genius are really produced by the applause conferred on him. "To him whom the world admires, the happiness of the world must be dear," said Madame De Staël. Romney, the painter, held as a maxim that every diffident artist required "almost a daily portion of cheering applause." How often do

such find their powers paralysed by the depression of confidence or the appearance of neglect. When the North American Indians, amidst their circle, chant their gods and their heroes, the honest savages laud the living worthies, as well as their departed; and when, as we are told, an auditor hears the shout of his own name, he answers by a cry of pleasure and of pride. The savage and the man of genius are here true to nature, but pleasure and pride in his own name must raise no emotion in the breast of genius amidst a polished circle. To bring himself down to their usual mediocrity, he must start at an expression of regard, and turn away even from one of his own votaries. Madame De Staël, an exquisite judge of the feelings of the literary character, was aware of this change, which has rather occurred in our manners, than in men of genius themselves. "Envy," says that eloquent writer, "among the Greeks, existed sometimes between rivals; it has now passed to the spectators; and by a strange singularity the mass of men are jealous

of the efforts which are tried to add to their pleasures or to merit their approbation."

But this, it seems, is not always the case with men of genius, since the accusation we are noticing has been so often reiterated. Take from some that supreme confidence in themselves, that pride of exultation, and you crush the germ of their excellence. Many vast designs must have perished in the conception, had not their authors breathed this vital air of self-delight, this creative spirit, so operative in great undertakings. We have recently seen this principle in the literary character unfold itself in the life of the late Bishop of Landaff. Whatever he did, he felt it was done as a master; whatever he wrote, it was, as he once declared, the best work on the subject yet written. With this feeling he emulated Cicero in retirement or in action. "When I am dead, you will not soon meet with another JOHN HUNTER," said the great anatomist to one of his garrulous friends. An apology is formed by his biographer for relating the fact, but the

weakness is only in the apology. When HOGARTH was engaged in his work of the *Marriage à la Mode*, he said to Reynolds, "I shall very soon gratify the world with such a sight as they have never seen equalled."—"One of his foibles," adds Mr. Northcote, "it is well known, was the excessive high opinion he had of his own abilities." Has Mr. Northcote, himself a man of genius, never perceived the same lambent flame play around his own head? Was it a *foible* in Hogarth to cast the glove when he has more than redeemed the pledge of his knight-errantry? CORNEILLE has given a very noble full-length of the sublime egotism which accompanied him through life*; but I doubt, if we had any such author in the present day, whether he would dare to be so just to himself, and so hardy to the public. The self-praise of BUFFON at least equalled his genius; and the inscription beneath his statue in the library of the Jardin des Plantes, which I have been told was raised to him in his lifetime, exceeds

* See it versified in Curiosities of Literature.

all panegyric;—it places him alone in nature, as the first and the last interpreter of her works. He said of the great geniuses of modern ages, that there were not more than five; Newton, Bacon, Leibnitz, Montesquieu, and Myself." With this spirit he conceived and terminated his great works, and sat in patient meditation at his desk for half a century, till all Europe, even in a state of war, bowed to the modern Pliny.

Nor is the vanity of Buffon, and Voltaire, and Rousseau purely national; for men of genius in all ages have expressed a consciousness of the internal force of genius. No one felt this self-exultation more potent then our HOBBES; who has indeed, in his controversy with Wallis, asserted that there may be nothing more just than self-commendation.* There is a curious passage in the Purgatorio of DANTE, where describing the transitory nature of literary fame, and the variableness of human opinion, the poet alludes with confidence to his own future greatness. Of

* See Quarrels of Authors, vol. iii. p. 113.

two authors of the name of Guido, the one having eclipsed the other, the poet writes ;

> Così ha tolto l'uno all' altro Guido
> La gloria della lingua ; *e forse è nato*
> *Chi l' uno e l' altro caccerà di nido.*
>
> Thus has one Guido from the other snatch'd
> The letter'd pride ; *and he perhaps is born*
> *Who shall drive either from their nest.**

De Thou, one of the most noble-minded of historians, in the Memoirs of his own life, composed in the third person, has surprised and somewhat puzzled the critics, by that frequent distribution of self-commendation which they knew not how to reconcile with the modesty and gravity with which the president was so amply endowed. After his great and solemn labour, amidst the injustice of his persecutors, this eminent man had sufficient experience of his real worth to assert it. Kepler, amidst his great discoveries, looks down like a superior being on other men. He breaks forth in glory and daring egotism ; " I dare insult mankind by confessing that I am he who has turned science to advan-

* Carey.

tage. If I am pardoned, I shall rejoice; if blamed, I shall endure it. The die is cast; I have written this book, and whether it be read by posterity or by my contemporaries is of no consequence; it may well wait for a reader during one century, when God himself during six thousand years has not sent an observer like myself." He truly predicts that "his discoveries would be verified in succeeding ages;" and prefers his own glory to the possession of the electorate of Saxony. It was this solitary majesty, this futurity of their genius, which hovered over the sleepless pillow of Bacon, of Newton, and of Montesquieu; of Ben Jonson, of Milton, and Corneille; and of Michael Angelo. Such men anticipate their contemporaries; they know they are creators, long before they are hailed as such by the tardy consent of the public. These men stand on Pisgah heights, and for them the sun shines on a land which none yet view but themselves.

There is an admirable essay in Plutarch "On the manner by which we may praise ourselves

without exciting envy in others." The sage seems to consider self-praise as a kind of illustrious impudence, and has one very striking image: he compares these eulogists to famished persons, who finding no other food, in their rage have eaten their own flesh, and thus shockingly nourished themselves by their own substance. He allows persons in high office to praise themselves, if by this they can repel calumny and accusation, as did Pericles before the Athenians: but the Romans found fault with Cicero, who so frequently reminded them of his exertions in the conspiracy of Catiline; while, when Scipio told them that "They should not presume to judge of a citizen to whom they owed the power of judging all men," the people covered themselves with flowers, and followed him to the capitol to offer a thanksgiving to Jove. "Cicero," adds Plutarch, "praised himself without necessity. Scipio was in personal danger, and this took away what is odious in self-praise." An author seems sometimes to occupy the situation of a person in high office; and there may be occa-

sions when with a noble simplicity, if he appeal to his works, of which all men may judge, he may be permitted to assert or to maintain his claims. It has at least been the practice of men of genius, for in this very essay we find Timotheus, Euripides, and Pindar censured, though they deserved all the praise they gave themselves.

EPICURUS, writing to a minister of state, declares, "If you desire glory, nothing can bestow it more than the letters I write to you:" and SENECA, in quoting these words, adds, "What Epicurus promised to his friend, that, my Lucilius, I promise you." *Orna me!* was the constant cry of CICERO; and he desires the historian Lucceius to write separately the conspiracy of Catiline, and to publish quickly, that while he yet lived he might taste the sweetness of his glory. HORACE and OVID were equally sensible to their immortality; but what modern poet would be tolerated with such an avowal? Yet DRYDEN honestly declares that it was better for him to own this failing of vanity, than the

world to do it for him; and adds, "For what other reason have I spent my life in so unprofitable a study? Why am I grown old in seeking so barren a reward as fame? The same parts and application which have made me a poet, might have raised me to any honours of the gown." Was not CERVANTES very sensible to his own merits when a rival started up? and did he not assert them too, and distinguish his own work by a handsome compliment? LOPE DE VEGA celebrated his own poetic powers under the pseudonyme of a pretended editor, Thomas Barguillos. I regret that his noble biographer, than whom no one can more truly sympathise with the emotions of genius, has censured the bard for his querulous or his intrepid tone, and for the quaint conceit of his title-page, where his detractor is introduced as a beetle in a *vega* or garden, attacking its flowers, but expiring in the very sweetness he would injure. The inscription under BOILEAU'S portrait, which gives a preference to the French satirist over Juvenal and Horace, is known to have been written by

himself. Nor was BUTLER less proud of his own merits; for he has done ample justice to his Hudibras, and traced out, with great self-delight, its variety of excellencies. RICHARDSON, the novelist, exhibits one of the most striking instances of what is called literary vanity, the delight of an author in his works; he has pointed out all the beauties of his three great works, in various manners*. He always taxed a visitor by one of his long letters. It was this intense self-delight which produced his voluminous labours.

There are certain authors whose very existence seems to require a high conception of their own talents; and who must, as some animals appear to do, furnish the means of life out of their own substance. These men of genius open their career with peculiar tastes, or with a predilection for some great work of no immediate interest; in a word, with many unpopular dispositions. Yet we see them magnanimous, though defeated, proceeding with the public

* I have observed them in Curiosities of Literature.

feeling against them. At length we view them ranking with their rivals. Without having yielded up their peculiar tastes or their incorrigible vitiousness, they have, however, heightened their individual excellencies. No human opinion can change their self-opinion. Alive to the consciousness of their powers, their pursuits are placed above impediment, and their great views can suffer no contraction; *possunt quia posse videntur.* Such was the language Lord BACON once applied to himself when addressing a king. "I know," said the great philosopher, "that I am censured of some conceit of my ability or worth; but I pray your majesty impute it to desire, *possunt quia posse videntur.*" These men of genius bear a charmed mail on their breast; "hopeless, not heartless," may be often the motto of their ensign; and if they do not always possess reputation, they still look onwards for fame; for these do not necessarily accompany each other.

An author is more sensible of his own merits, as he also is of his labour, which is invisible to

all others, while he is unquestionably much less so of his defects, than most of his readers. The author not only comprehends his merits better, because they have passed through a long process in his mind, but he is familiar with every part, while the reader has but a vague notion of the whole. Why does an excellent work, by repetition, rise in interest? Because in obtaining this gradual intimacy with an author, we appear to recover half the genius which we had lost on a first perusal. The work of genius too is associated, in the mind of the author, with much more than it contains; and the true supplement, which he only can give, has not always accompanied the work itself. We find great men often greater than the books they write. Ask the man of genius if he have written all that he wished to have written? Has he satisfied himself in this work, for which you accuse his pride? Has he dared what required intrepidity to achieve? Has he evaded difficulties which he should have overcome? The mind of the reader has the limits

of a mere recipient, while that of the author, even after his work, is teeming with creation. "On many occasions, my soul seems to know more than it can say, and to be endowed with a mind by itself, far superior to the mind I really have," said MARIVAUX, with equal truth and happiness.

With these explanations of what are called the vanity and egotism of Genius, be it remembered, that the sense of their own sufficiency is assumed by men at their own risk. The great man who thinks greatly of himself, is not diminishing that greatness in heaping fuel on his fire. It is indeed otherwise with his unlucky brethren, with whom an illusion of literary vanity may end in the aberrations of harmless madness; as it happened to PERCIVAL STOCKDALE. After a parallel between himself and Charles XII. of Sweden, he concludes that "some parts will be to *his* advantage, and some to *mine;*" but in regard to fame, the main object between himself and Charles XII., Percival imagined that "his own, will not probably take

its fixed and immoveable station, and shine with its expanded and permanent splendour, till it consecrates his ashes, till it illumines his tomb." After this, the reader, who may never have heard of the name of Percival Stockdale, must be told that there exist his own "Memoirs of his Life and Writings."* The memoirs of a scribbler who saw the prospects of life close on him while he imagined that his contemporaries were unjust, are instructive to literary men. To correct, and to be corrected, should be their daily practice, that they may be taught not only to exult in themselves, but to fear themselves.

It is hard to refuse these men of genius that *aura vitalis*, of which they are so apt to be liberal to others. Are they not accused of the meanest adulations? When a young writer experiences the notice of a person of some eminence, he has expressed himself in language which transcends that of mortality. A finer

* I have sketched a character of PERCIVAL STOCKDALE, in Calamities of Authors; it was taken *ad vivum*.

reason than reason itself, inspires it. The sensation has been expressed with all its fulness, by Milton;

"The debt immense of endless gratitude."

Who ever pays an "immense debt," in small sums? Every man of genius has left such honourable traces of his private affections; from LOCKE, whose dedication of his great work is more adulative than could be imagined from a temperate philosopher, to CHURCHILL, whose warm eulogiums on his friends beautifully contrast with his satire. Even in advanced age, the man of genius dwells on the praise he caught in his youth from veteran genius, which, like the aloe, will flower at the end of life. When Virgil was yet a youth, it is said that Cicero heard one of his eclogues, and exclaimed with his accustomed warmth,

Magnæ spes altera Romæ!

"The second hope of mighty Rome!" intending by the first either himself or Lucretius. The words of Cicero were the secret honey on which

the imagination of Virgil fed for many a year; for in one of his latest productions, the twelfth book of the Æneid, he applies these very words to Ascanius. So long had the accents of Cicero's praise lingered in the poet's ear!

This extreme susceptibility of praise in men of genius, is the same exuberant sensibility which is so alive to censure. I have elsewhere fully shown how some have died of criticism.* The self-love of genius is perhaps much more delicate than gross.

But this fatal susceptibility is the cause of that strange facility which has often astonished the world, by the sudden transitions of sentiment which literary characters have frequently exhibited. They have eulogised men and events which they had reprobated, and reprobated what they had eulogised. The recent history of political revolutions has furnished some monstrous examples of this subservience to power. Guicciardini records one of his own times, which has been often repeated in ours. JOVIANUS

* In Curiosities of Literature.

PONTANUS, the secretary of Ferdinand, King of Naples, was also selected to be the tutor of the prince, his son. When Charles VIII. of France invaded Naples, Pontanus was deputed to address the French conqueror. To render himself agreeable to the enemies of his country, he did not avoid expatiating on the demerits of his expelled patrons: "So difficult it is," adds the grave and dignified historian, "for ourselves to observe that moderation and those precepts which no man knew better than Pontanus; who was endowed with such copious literature, and composed with such facility in moral philosophy, and possessed such acquirements in universal erudition, that he had made himself a prodigy to the eye of the world."* The student, occupied by abstract pursuits, may not indeed always take much interest in the change of dynasties; and perhaps the famous cancelled dedication to Cromwell, by the learned Orientalist, DR. CASTELL, who supplied its place by another to Charles II., ought not to be placed to the account of political tergiversation. But the ver-

* Guicciardini, Book II.

satile adoration of the continental *sçavans* of the republic or the monarchy, the consul or the emperor, has inflicted an unhealing wound on the literary character; since, like PONTNAUS, to gratify their new master, they had not the greatness of mind to save themselves from ingratitude to their old.

Their vengeance, as quickly kindled, lasts as long. Genius is a dangerous gift of nature. The same effervescent passions form a Catiline or a Cicero. Plato lays great stress on his man of genius possessing the most vehement passions, but, he adds reason to restrain them. It is Imagination which by their side stands as their good or evil spirit. Glory or infamy is but a different direction of the same passion.

How are we to describe symptoms which, flowing from one source, yet show themselves in such opposite forms as those of an intermittent fever, a silent delirium, or a horrid hypochondriasm? Have we no other opiate to still the agony, no other cordial to warm the heart, than the great ingredient in the recipe of

Plato's visionary man of genius—calm reason? Must men, who so rarely obtain this tardy panacea, remain with all their tortured and torturing passions about them, often self-disgusted, self-humiliated? The enmities of genius are often connected with their morbid imagination. These originate in casual slights, or in unguarded expressions, or in hasty opinions, or in witty derision, or even in the obtruding goodness of tender admonition. The man of genius broods over the phantom that darkens his feelings: he multiplies a single object; he magnifies the smallest; and suspicions become certainties. It is in this unhappy state that he sharpens his vindictive fangs, in a libel called his "Memoirs," or in another species of public outrage, styled a "Criticism."

We are told, that COMINES the historian, when residing at the court of the Count de Charolois afterwards Duke of Burgundy, one day returning from hunting, with inconsiderate jocularity sat down before the Count, and ordered the prince to pull off his boots. The Count

would not affect greatness, and having executed his commission, in return for the princely amusement, the Count dashed the boot on Comines's nose, which bled; and from that time, he was mortified at the court of Burgundy, by retaining the nick-name of *the booted head.* The blow rankled in the heart of the man of genius, and the Duke of Burgundy has come down to us in COMINES memoirs, blackened by his vengeance. Many, unknown to their readers, like COMINES, have had a booted head; but the secret poison is distilled on their lasting page, as we have recently witnessed in Lord Waldegrave's Memoirs. Swift's perpetual malevolence to Dryden originated in that great poet's prediction, that "cousin Swift would never be a poet;" a prediction which the wit never could forget. I have elsewhere fully written a tale of literary hatred, where is seen a man of genius, in the character of GILBERT STEWART, devoting a whole life to harassing the industry or the genius which he himself could not attain.*

* See Calamities of Authors.

A living Italian poet, of great celebrity, when at the court of Rome, presented a magnificent edition of his poetry to Pius VI. The bard, Mr. Hobhouse informs us, lived not in the good graces of his Holiness, and although the Pontiff accepted the volume, he did not forbear a severity of remark which could not fall unheeded by the modern poet; for on this occasion, repeating some verses of Metastasio, his Holiness drily added, "No one now-a-days writes like that great poet." Never was this to be erased from memory: the stifled resentment of MONTI vehemently broke forth at the moment the French carried off Pius VI. from Rome. Then the long indignant secretary poured forth an invective more severe "against the great harlot" than was ever traced by a Protestant pen—MONTI now invoked the rock of Sardinia; the poet bade it fly from its base, that *the last of monsters* might not find even a tomb to shelter him. Such was the curse of a poet on his former patron now an object of misery—a return for "placing him below Metastasio!"

The French Revolution affords illustrations of the worst human passions. When the wretched COLLOT D'HERBOIS was tossed up in the storm, to the summit of power, a monstrous imagination seized him; he projected rasing the city of Lyons and massacring its inhabitants. He had even the heart to commence, and to continue this conspiracy against human nature; the ostensible crime was royalism, but the secret motive is said to have been literary vengeance! As wretched a poet and actor as a man, D'Herbois had been hissed off the theatre at Lyons, and to avenge that ignominy, he had meditated over this vast and remorseless crime. Is there but one Collot D'Herbois in the universe?

Long since this was written, a fact has been recorded of CHENIER the French dramatic poet, which parallels the horrid tale of COLLOT D'HERBOIS, which some have been willing to doubt from its enormity. It is said, that this monster, in the revolutionary period, when he had the power to save the life of his brother

André, while his father, prostrate before a wretched son, was imploring for the life of an innocent brother, remained silent; it is further said, that he appropriated to himself a tragedy which he found among his brother's manuscripts. "Fratricide from literary jealousy," observes the relator of this anecdote, "was a crime reserved for a modern French revolutionist."* There are some pathetic stanzas which André was composing in his last moments, when awaiting his fate; the most pathetic of all stanzas is that one which he left unfinished—

Peut-être, avant que l'heure en cercle promenée
Ait posé, sur l'émail brillant
Dans les soixante pas où sa route est bornée
Son pied sonore et vigilant,
Le sommeil du tombeau pressera ma paupière—

At this unfinished stanza, was the pensive poet summoned to the guillotine!

* Edinburgh Review, XXXV. 159.

CHAPTER XVI.

The domestic life of genius.—Defects of great compositions attributed to domestic infelicities.—The home of the literary character should be the abode of repose and silence.—Of the Father.—Of the Mother.—Of family genius.—Men of genius not more respected than other men in their domestic circle.—The cultivators of science and art do not meet on equal terms with others, in domestic life.—Their neglect of those around them.—Often accused of imaginary crimes.

WHEN the temper and the leisure of the literary character are alike broken, even his best works, the too faithful mirrors of his state of mind, will participate in its inequalities; and surely the incubations of genius in its delicate and shadowy combinations, are not less sensible in their operation than the composition of sonorous bodies, where, while the warm metal is settling in the mould, even an unusual vibra-

tion of the air during the moment of fusion, will injure the tone.

Some of the conspicuous blemishes of several great compositions may be attributed to the domestic infelicities of their authors. The desultory life of CAMOENS is imagined to be perceptible in the deficient connexion of his epic; and MILTON's blindness and divided family prevented that castigating criticism, which otherwise had erased passages which have escaped from his revising hand.—He felt himself in the situation of his Sampson Agonistes, whom he so pathetically describes, as

"His foes' derision, captive, poor, and blind."

Even LOCKE complains of his "discontinued way of writing," and "writing by incoherent parcels," from the avocations of a busy and unsettled life, which undoubtedly produced a deficiency of method in the disposition of the materials of his great work. The careless rapid lines of DRYDEN are justly attributed to his distress, and indeed he pleads for his inequalities from his domestic circumstances. JOHN

SON often silently, but eagerly, corrected the Ramblers in their successive editions, of which so many had been despatched in haste. The learned GREAVES offered some excuses for his errors in his edition of Abulfeda, from "his being five years encumbered with law-suits and diverted from his studies." When at length he returned to them, he expresses his surprise "at the pains he had formerly undergone," but of which he now felt himself "unwilling, he knew not how, of again undergoing." GOLDONI, when at the bar, abandoned his comic talent for several years; and having resumed it, his first comedy totally failed: "My head," says he, "was occupied with my professional employment; I was uneasy in mind and in bad humour." A law-suit, a bankruptcy, a domestic feud, or an indulgence in criminal or in foolish pursuits, have chilled the fervour of imagination, scattered into fragments many a noble design, and paralysed the finest genius. The distractions of GUIDO's studies from his passion for gaming, and of PARMEGIANO's for

alchemy, have been traced in their works, which are often hurried over and unequal. It is curious to observe, that CUMBERLAND attributes the excellence of his comedy, "The West Indian," to the peculiar happy situation in which he found himself at the time of its composition, free from the incessant avocations which had crossed him in the writing of "The Brothers." "I was master of my time, my mind was free, and I was happy in the society of the dearest friends I had on earth. The calls of office, the cavillings of angry rivals, and the gibings of newspaper critics, could not reach me on the banks of the Shannon, where all within doors was love and affection. In no other period of my life have the same happy circumstances combined to cheer me in any of my literary labours."

The best years of MENGS's life were embittered by the misery and the harshness of his father, who himself a poor artist and with poorer feelings, converted his home into a prison-house, forced his son into the slavery of

stipulated task-work, while bread and water were the only fruits of the fine arts. In this domestic persecution, from which he was at length obliged to fly, the son contracted those morose and saturnine habits, which for ever after shut up the ungenial MENGS in the dark solitude of his soul. Alonso CANO, a celebrated Spanish painter, would have carried his art much higher had not the unceasing persecution of the inquisitors entirely deprived him of that tranquillity so necessary to the very existence of art. OVID, in exile on the barren shores of Tomos, deserted by his genius, in his copious *Tristia* loses much of the luxuriance of his fancy.

We have a remarkable evidence of domestic unhappiness annihilating the very faculty of genius itself, in the case of Dr. BROOK TAYLOR, the celebrated author of the "Linear Perspective." This great mathematician in early life distinguished himself as an inventor in science, and the most sanguine hopes of his future discoveries were raised both at home and abroad.

Two unexpected events in domestic life extinguished his inventive faculties. After the loss of two wives, whom he regarded with no common affection, he became unfitted for profound studies; he carried his own personal despair into his favourite objects of pursuit, and abandoned them. The inventor of the most original work, suffered the last fifteen years of his life to drop away, without hope, and without exertion; nor is this a solitary instance, where a man of genius deprived of the idolized partner of his existence has no longer been able to find an object in his studies, and where even fame itself has ceased to interest. The reason which ROUSSEAU alleges for the cynical spleen which so frequently breathes forth in his works, shows how the domestic character of the man of genius leaves itself behind in his productions. After describing the infelicity of his domestic affairs occasioned by the mother of Theresa, and Theresa herself, both women of the lowest class and the worst dispositions, he adds on this wretched marriage, " these unexpected disagree-

able events, in a state of my own choice, plunged me into literature, to give a new direction and diversion to my mind; and in all my first works, I scattered that bilious humour which had occasioned this very occupation." Our author's character in his works was the very opposite to the one in which he appeared to these low people. Feeling his degradation among them, for they treated his simplicity as utter silliness, his personal timidity assumed a tone of boldness and originality in his writings, while a strong personal sense of shame heightened his causticity, and he delighted to contemn that urbanity in which he had never shared and which he knew not to practise. His miserable subservience to these people was the real cause of his oppressed spirit calling out for some undefined freedom in society; and thus the real Rousseau, with all his disordered feelings, only appeared in his writings. The secrets of his heart were confided to his pen.

"The painting-room must be like Eden before the fall; no joyless turbulent passions

must enter there,"—exclaims the enthusiast RICHARDSON. The home of the literary character should be the abode of repose and of silence. There must he look for the feasts of study, in progressive and alternate labours; a taste "which," says GIBBON, "I would not exchange for the treasures of India." ROUSSEAU had always a work going on, for rainy days and spare hours, such as his dictionary of music; a variety of works never tired; it was the single one which exhausted. METASTASIO looks with delight on his variety, which resembled the fruits in the garden of Armida,

E mentre spunta l'un, l'altro mature.

While one matures, the other buds and blows.

Nor is it always fame, or any lower motive, which may induce the literary character to hold an unwearied pen. Another equally powerful exists, which must remain inexplicable to him who knows not to escape from the listlessness of life—it is the passion for literary occupation. He whose eye can only measure the space occupied by the voluminous labours of the elder

Pliny, of a Mazzuchelli, a Muratori, a Montfaucon, and a Gough, all men who laboured from the love of labour, and can see nothing in that space but the industry which filled it, is like him who only views a city at a distance—the streets and the edifices, and all the life and population within, he can never know. These literary characters projected their works as so many schemes to escape from uninteresting pursuits; and, in these folios, how many evils of life did they bury, while their happiness expanded with their volume. Aulus Gellius desired to live no longer than he was able to retain the faculty of writing and observing. The literary character must grow as impassioned with his subject as Ælian with his History of Animals; "wealth and honour I might have obtained at the courts of princes; but I preferred the delight of multiplying my knowledge. I am aware that the avaricious and the ambitious will accuse me of folly, but I have always found most pleasure in observing the nature of

animals, studying their character, and writing their history."

Even with those who have acquired their celebrity, the love of literary labour is not diminished, a circumstance recorded by the younger Pliny of Livy. In a preface to one of his lost books, that historian had said that he had obtained sufficient glory by his former writings on the Roman history, and might now repose in silence; but his mind was so restless and so abhorrent of indolence, that it only felt its existence in literary exertion. In a similar situation the feeling was fully experienced by HUME. Our philosopher completed his History neither for money nor for fame, having then more than a sufficiency of both—but chiefly to indulge a habit as a resource against indolence.* These are the minds which are without hope, if they are without occupation.

Amidst the repose and silence of study, delightful to the literary character are the

* This appears in one of his interesting letters first published in the Literary Gazette, Oct. 20, 1821.

soothing interruptions of the voices of those whom he loves, recalling him from his abstractions into social existence. These re-animate his languor, and moments of inspiration are caught in the emotions of affection, when a father or a friend, a wife, a daughter, or a sister, become the participators of his own tastes, the companions of his studies, and identify their happiness with his fame. A beautiful incident in the domestic life of literature is one which Morellet has recently revealed of MARMONTEL. In presenting his collected works to his wife, she discovered that the author had dedicated his volumes to herself; but the dedication was not made painful to her modesty, for it was not a public one. Nor was it so concise as to be mistaken for a compliment. The theme was copious, for the heart overflowed in the pages consecrated to her domestic virtues; and MARMONTEL left it as a record, that their children might learn the gratitude of their father, and know the character of their mother, when the writer should be no more. Many readers were

perhaps surprised to find in NECKER's *Compte rendu au Roi*, a political and financial work, a great and lovely character of domestic excellence in his wife. This was more obtrusive than Marmontel's private dedication; yet it was not the less sincere. If NECKER failed in the cautious reserve of private feelings, who will censure? Nothing seems misplaced which the heart dictates.

If HORACE were dear to his friends, he declares they owed him to his father,

> ——————— purus et insons
> (Ut me collaudem) si vivo et carus amicis,
> Causa fuit Pater his.
>
> If pure and innocent, if dear (forgive
> These little praises) to my friends I live,
> My father was the cause.

This intelligent father, an obscure tax-gatherer, discovered the propensity of Horace's mind; for he removed the boy of genius from a rural seclusion to the metropolis, anxiously attending on him to his various masters. GROTIUS, like Horace, celebrated in verse his gratitude to his

excellent father, who had formed him not only to be a man of learning but a great character. VITRUVIUS pours forth a grateful prayer to the memory of his parents, who had instilled into his soul a love for literary and philosophical subjects; and it is an amiable trait in PLUTARCH to have introduced his father in the Symposiacs as an elegant critic and moralist, and his brother Lamprias, whose sweetness of disposition inclining to cheerful raillery, the Sage of Cheronæa has immortalized. The father of GIBBON urged him to literary distinction, and the dedication of the "Essay on Literature" to that father, connected with his subsequent labour, shows the force of the excitement The father of POPE lived long enough to witness his son's celebrity.

"Tears, such as tender fathers shed,
Warm from my eyes descend,
For joy, to think when I am dead,
My son shall have mankind his Friend."*

* These lines have been beautifully applied by Mr. Bowles, who, however, in his edition of Pope, did not contribute to realize the parental wish.

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The son of BUFFON one day surprised his father by the sight of a column, which he had raised to the memory of his father's eloquent genius. "It will do you honour," observed the Gallic sage. And when that son in the revolution was led to the guillotine, he ascended in silence so impressed with his father's fame, that he only told the people, "I am the son of Buffon!"

Fathers absorbed in their occupations can but rarely attract their offspring. The first durable impressions of our moral existence come from the mother. The first prudential wisdom to which Genius listens falls from her lips, and only her caresses can create the moments of tenderness. The earnest discernment of a mother's love survives in the imagination of manhood. The mother of Sir WILLIAM JONES, having formed a plan for the education of her son, withdrew from great connexions that she might live only for that son. Her great principle of education, was to excite by curiosity; the result could not fail to be knowledge.

"Read, and you will know," she constantly replied to her filial pupil. And we have his own acknowledgment, that to this maxim, which produced the habit of study, he was indebted for his future attainments. KANT, the German metaphysician, was always fond of declaring that he owed to the ascendancy of his mother's character, the severe inflexibility of his moral principles. The mother of BURNS kindled his genius by delighting his childhood with the recitations of the old Scottish Ballads, while to his father he attributed his cast of character. Bishop WATSON traced to the affectionate influence of his mother, the religious feelings which he confesses he inherited from her. The mother of EDGEWORTH, confined through life to her apartment, was the only person who studied his constitutional volatility. When he hastened to her death-bed, the last imperfect accents of that beloved voice, reminded him of the past and warned him of the future, and he declares—that voice "had a happy influence on his habits," as happy, at least, as his own vola-

tile nature would allow. "To the manner in which my mother formed me at an early age," said Napoleon, "I principally owe my subsequent elevation. My opinion is, that the future good or bad conduct of a child entirely depends upon the mother."

There is this remarkable in the strong affections of the mother, in the formation of the literary character, that, without even partaking of, or sympathising with the pleasures the child is fond of, the mother will often cherish those first decided tastes merely from the delight of promoting the happiness of her son; so that that genius, which some would produce on a preconceived system, or implant by stratagem, or inforce by application, with her may be only the watchful labour of love. One of our most eminent antiquaries has often assured me that his great passion, and I may say his genius, for his curious knowledge and his vast researches, he attributes to maternal affection. When his early taste for these studies was thwarted by the very different one of his father's,

the mother silently supplied her son with the sort of treasures he languished for, blessing the knowledge, which indeed she could not share with him, but which she beheld imparting happiness to her youthful antiquary.

There is, what may be called, FAMILY GENIUS. In the home of a man of genius is diffused an electrical atmosphere, and his own pre-eminence strikes out talents in all. "The active pursuits of my father," says the daughter of EDGEWORTH, "spread an animation through the house by connecting children with all that was going on, and allowing them to join in thought and conversation; sympathy and emulation excited mental exertion in the most agreeable manner." EVELYN, in his beautiful retreat at Sayes Court, had inspired his family with that variety of tastes which he himself was spreading throughout the nation. His son translated Rapin's "Gardens," which poem the father proudly preserved in his "Sylva;" his lady, ever busied in his study, excelled in the arts her husband loved, and de-

signed the frontispiece to his Lucretius: she was the cultivator of their celebrated garden, which served as "an example" of his great work on "forest trees." Cowley, who has commemorated Evelyn's love of books and gardens, has delightfully applied them to his lady, in whom, says the bard, Evelyn meets both pleasures;

> "The fairest garden in her looks,
> And in her mind the wisest books."

The house of HALLER resembled a temple consecrated to science and the arts, and the votaries were his own family. The universal acquirements of HALLER were possessed in some degree by every one under his roof; and their studious delight in transcribing manuscripts, in consulting authors, in botanising, drawing and colouring the plants under his eye, formed occupations which made the daughters happy and the sons eminent. The painter STELLA inspired his family to copy his fanciful inventions, and the playful graver of Claudine Stella, his niece, animated his "Sports of Children." I

have seen a print of COYPEL in his *studio*, and by his side his little daughter, who is intensely watching the progress of her father's pencil. The artist has represented himself in the act of suspending his labour to look on his child. At that moment, his thoughts were divided between two objects of his love. The character, and the works of the late Elizabeth HAMILTON, were formed entirely by her brother. Admiring the man she loved, she imitated what she admired; and while the brother was arduously completing the version of the Persian Hedaya, the sister, who had associated with his morning-tasks and his evening-conversations, was recalling all the ideas and portraying her fraternal master in her "Hindoo Rajah."

Nor are there wanting instances where this FAMILY-GENIUS has been carried down through successive generations: the volume of the father has been continued by a son, or a relative. The history of the family of the ZWINGERS is a combination of studies and inherited tastes. Theodore published, in 1697, a folio herbal, of

which his son Frederic gave an enlarged edition in 1744; and the family was honoured by their name having been given to a genus of plants dedicated to their memory, and known in botany, by the name of the *Zwingera*. In history, and in literature, the family name was equally eminent; the same Theodore continued a great work, "The Theatre of Human Life," which had been begun by his father-in-law, and which for the third time was enlarged by another son. Among the historians of Italy, it is delightful to contemplate this family-genius transmitting itself with unsullied probity among the three VILLANIS, and the MALASPINIS, and the two PORTAS. The history of the learned family of the STEPHENS presents a dynasty of literature, and to distinguish the numerous members they have been designated as Henry I., and Henry II., as Robert I., the IId., and the IIId. Our country may exult in having possessed many literary families—the WARTONS, the father and two sons; the BURNEYS,

more in number; and the nephews of Milton, whose humble torch at least was lighted at the altar of the great bard.

No event in literary history is more impressive than the fate of QUINTILIAN; it was in the midst of his elaborate work, which was composed to form the literary character of a son, that he experienced the most terrible affliction in the domestic life of genius—the successive deaths of his wife and his only child. It was a moral earthquake with a single survivor amidst the ruins. An awful burst of parental and literary affliction breaks forth in Quintilian's lamentation,—"My wealth, and my writings, the fruits of a long and painful life, must now be reserved only for strangers; all I possess is for aliens, and no longer mine!" We feel the united agony of the husband, the father, and the man of genius!

Deprived of these social consolations, we see JOHNSON call about him those whose calamities exiled them from society, and his roof lodges

the blind, the lame and the poor; for the heart must possess something, it can call its own, to be kind to.

In domestic life, the Abbé DE ST. PIERRE enlarged its moral vocabulary, by fixing in his language two significant words. One served to explain the virtue most familiar to him—*bienfaisance;* and that irritable vanity which magnifies its ephemeral fame the sage reduced to a mortifying diminutive—*la gloriole!*

It has often excited surprise that men of genius are not more reverenced than other men in their domestic circle. The disparity between the public and the private esteem of the same man is often striking. In privacy we discover that the comic genius is not always cheerful, that the sage is sometimes ridiculous, and the poet seldom delightful. The golden hour of invention must terminate like other hours, and when the man of genius returns to the cares, the duties, the vexations, and the amusements of life, his companions behold him as one of themselves—the creature of habits and infirmi-

ties. Men of genius, like the deities of Homer, are deities only in their "Heaven of Invention." Mixing with mortals, they shed their blood like Venus, or bellow like Mars.

In the business of life the cultivators of science and the arts, with all their simplicity of feeling and generous openness about them, do not meet on equal terms with other men. Their frequent abstractions calling off the mind to whatever enters into its lonely pursuits, render them greatly inferior to others in practical and immediate observation. Studious men have been reproached as being so deficient in the knowledge of the human character, that they are usually disqualified for the management of public business. Their confidence in their friends has no bound, while they become the easy dupes of the designing. A friend, who was in office with the late Mr. CUMBERLAND, assures me, that he was so intractable to the forms of business, and so easily induced to do more or to do less than he ought, that he was compelled to perform the official business of

this literary man, to free himself from his annoyance; and yet, CUMBERLAND could not be reproached with any deficiency in a knowledge of the human character, which he was always touching with a caustic pleasantry.

ADDISON and PRIOR were unskilful statesmen; and MALESHERBES confessed a few days before his death, that TURGOT and himself, men of genius and philosophers, from whom the nation had expected much, had badly administered the affairs of the state; for "knowing men but by books, and unskilful in business, we could not form the king to the government." A man of genius may know the whole map of the world of human nature; but, like the great geographer, may be apt to be lost in the wood, which any one in the neighbourhood knows better than him.

"The conversation of a poet," says Goldsmith, "is that of a man of sense, while his actions are those of a fool." Genius, careless of the future, and often absent in the present, avoids too deep a commingling in the minor

cares of life. Hence it becomes a victim to common fools and vulgar villains. "I love my family's welfare, but I cannot be so foolish as to make myself the slave to the minute affairs of a house," said MONTESQUIEU. The story told of a man of learning is probably true, however ridiculous it may appear. Deeply occupied in his library, one, rushing in, informed him that the house was on fire! "Go to my wife—these matters belong to her!" pettishly replied the interrupted student. BACON sat at one end of his table wrapt in many a reverie, while at the other the creatures about him were trafficking with his honour, and ruining his good name: "I am better fitted for this," said that great man once, holding out a book, "than for the life I have of late led. Nature has not fitted me for that; knowing myself by inward calling to be fitter to hold a book than to play a part."

BUFFON, who consumed his mornings in his old tower of Montbar, at the end of his garden, with all nature opening to him, formed all his ideas of what was passing before him from the

arts of a pliant capuchin, and the comments of a perruquier on the scandalous chronicle of the village. These humble confidents he treated as children, but the children were commanding the great man! YOUNG, whose satires give the very anatomy of human foibles, was wholly governed by his housekeeper. She thought and acted for him, which probably greatly assisted the "Night Thoughts," but his curate exposed the domestic economy of a man of genius by a satirical novel. If I am truly informed, in that gallery of satirical portraits in his "Love of Fame," YOUNG has omitted one of the most striking—his OWN! While the poet's eye was glancing from "Earth to Heaven," he totally overlooked the lady whom he married, and who soon became the object of his contempt; and not only his wife, but his only son, who when he returned home for the vacation from Winchester school, was only admitted into the presence of his poetical father on the first and on the last day; and whose unhappy life is attri-

buted to this unnatural neglect* :—a lamentable domestic catastrophe, which, I fear, has too frequently occurred amidst the ardour and occupations of literary glory. Much, too much, of the tender domesticity of life is violated by literary characters. All that lives under their eye, all that should be guided by their hand, the recluse and abstracted men of genius must leave to their own direction. But let it not be forgotten, that, if such neglect others, they also neglect themselves, and are deprived of those family enjoyments for which few men have warmer sympathies. While the literary character burns with the ambition of raising a great literary name, he is too often forbidden to taste of this domestic intercourse or to indulge the versatile curiosity of his private amusements—for he is chained to his great

* These facts are drawn from a manuscript of the late Sir Herbert Croft, who regretted that Dr. Johnson would not suffer him to give this account during the doctor's lifetime, in his life of Young, but which it had always been his intention to have added to it.

labour. ROBERTSON felt this while employed on his histories, and he at length rejoiced when after many years of devoted toil, he returned to the luxury of reading for his own amusement and to the conversation of his friends. "Such a sacrifice," observes his philosophical biographer, "must be more or less made by all who devote themselves to letters, whether with a view to emolument or to fame; nor would it perhaps be easy to make it, were it not for the prospect (seldom, alas! realised) of earning by their exertions that learned and honourable leisure, which he was so fortunate as to attain."

But men of genius have often been accused of imaginary crimes. Their very eminence attracts the lie of calumny, which tradition often conveys beyond the possibility of refutation. Sometimes they are reproached as wanting in affection, when they displease their fathers by making an obscure name celebrated. The family of DESCARTES lamented, as a blot in their escutcheon, that Descartes, who was born a gen-

tleman, should become a philosopher; and this elevated genius was refused the satisfaction of embracing an unforgiving parent, while his dwarfish brother, with a mind diminutive as his person, ridiculed his philosophic relative, and turned to advantage his philosophic disposition. The daughter of ADDISON was educated with a perfect contempt of authors, and blushed to bear a name more illustrious than that of all the Warwicks, on her alliance to which noble family she prided herself. The children of MILTON, far from solacing the age of their blind parent, became impatient for his death, embittered his last hours with scorn and disaffection, and combined to cheat and rob him. Milton having enriched our national poetry by two immortal epics, with patient grief blessed the single female who did not entirely abandon him, and the obscure fanatic who was pleased with his poems because they were religious. What felicities! what laurels! And now we have recently learnt, that the

daughter of Madame De Sevigné lived on ill terms with her mother, of whose enchanting genius she appears to have been insensible! The unquestionable documents are two letters hitherto cautiously secreted. The daughter was in the house of her mother, when an extraordinary letter was addressed to her from the chamber of Madame de Sevigné, after a sleepless night. In this she describes with her peculiar felicity, the ill treatment she received from the daughter she idolised; it is a kindling effusion of maternal reproach, and tenderness, and genius.*

Some have been deemed disagreeable companions, because they felt the weariness of dulness, or the impertinence of intrusion; described as bad husbands when united to women, who without a kindred feeling had the mean art to prey upon their infirmities; or as bad fathers, because their offspring have not always

* Lettres inédites de Madame de Sevigné, p. 201 and 203.

reflected the moral beauty of their own page. But the magnet loses nothing of its virtue, even when the particles about it, incapable themselves of being attracted, are not acted on by its occult property.

CHAPTER XVII.

The poverty of literary men.—Poverty, a relative quality.—Of the poverty of literary men in what degree desirable.—Extreme poverty.—Task-work.—Of gratuitous works.—A project to provide against the worst state of poverty among literary men.

POVERTY is a state not so fatal to genius, as it is usually conceived to be. We shall find that it has been sometimes voluntarily chosen; and that to connect too closely great fortune with great genius, creates one of those powerful but unhappy alliances where the one party must necessarily act contrary to the interests of the other.

Poverty is a relative quality, like cold and heat, which are but the increase or the diminution in our own sensations. The positive idea must arise from comparison. There is a state

of poverty reserved even for the wealthy man, the instant that he comes in hateful contact with the enormous capitalist. But there is a poverty neither vulgar nor terrifying, asking no favours and on no terms receiving any; a poverty which annihilates its ideal evils, and, becoming even a source of pride, will confer independence, that first step to genius.

Among the continental nations, to accumulate wealth in the spirit of a capitalist, does not seem to form the prime object of domestic life. The traffic of money is with them left to the traffickers, their merchants, and their financiers. In our country the commercial character has so closely interwoven and identified itself with the national one, and its peculiar views have so terminated all our pursuits, that every rank is alike influenced by its spirit, and things are valued by a market-price, which naturally admit of no such appraisement. In a country where "The Wealth of Nations" has been fixed as the first principle of political existence, wealth has raised an aristocracy more noble than no-

bility, more celebrated than genius, more popular than patriotism; but however it may partake at times of a generous nature, it hardly looks beyond its own narrow pale. It is curious to notice that Montesquieu, who was in England, observed, that "If I had been born here, nothing could have consoled me in failing to accumulate a large fortune; but I do not lament the mediocrity of my circumstances in France." The sources of our national wealth have greatly multiplied, and the evil has consequently increased, since the visit of the great philosopher.

The cares of property, the daily concerns of a family, the pressure of such minute disturbers of their studies, have induced some great minds to regret the abolition of those monastic orders beneath whose undisturbed shade were produced the mighty labours of a MONTFAUCON, a CALMET, a FLOREZ, and the still unfinished volumes of the BENEDICTINES. Often has the literary character, amidst the busied delights of study, sighed "to bid a farewell sweet" to the turbulence of society. It was not discontent, nor any

undervaluing of general society, but the pure enthusiasm of the library, which once induced the studious EVELYN to sketch a retreat of this nature, which he addressed to his friend, the illustrious BOYLE. He proposed to form "A college where persons of the same turn of mind might enjoy the pleasure of agreeable society, and at the same time pass their days without care or interruption."* This abandonment of their life to their genius has, indeed, often cost them too dear, from the days of SOPHOCLES, who, ardent in his old age, neglected his family affairs, and was brought before his judges by his relations, as one fallen into a second childhood. The aged poet brought but

* This romantic literary retreat is one of those delightful reveries which the elegant taste of EVELYN, abounded with. It may be found at full length in the fifth volume of Boyle's Works, not in the second, as the Biog. Brit. says. His lady was to live among the society. "If I and my wife take up two apartments, for we are to be decently asunder, however I stipulate, and her inclination will greatly suit with it, that shall be no impediment to the society, but a considerable advantage to the economic part," &c.

one solitary witness in his favour—an unfinished tragedy; which having read, the judges rose before him, and retorted the charge on his accusers.

A parallel circumstance occurred to the Abbé COTIN, the victim of a rhyme of the satirical Boileau. Studious, and without fortune, Cotin had lived contented till he incurred the unhappiness of inheriting a large estate. Then a world of cares opened on him; his rents were not paid, and his creditors increased. Dragged from his Hebrew and Greek, poor Cotin resolved to make over his entire fortune to one of his heirs, on condition of maintenance. His other relations assumed that a man who parted with his estate in his lifetime must necessarily be deranged, and brought the learned Cotin into court. Cotin had nothing to say in his own favour, but requested his judges would allow him to address them from the sermons which he preached. The good sense, the sound reasoning, and the erudition of the preacher were such, that the whole bench unanimously declared that they themselves might

be considered as madmen, were they to condemn a man of letters who was desirous of escaping from the incumbrance of a fortune which had only interrupted his studies. *Panem et Circenses!* was the cry of the Roman mob; "Bread and our library!" should be that of the great literary character.

There may then be sufficient motives to induce such a man to make a state of mediocrity his choice If he lose his happiness, he mutilates his genius. GOLDONI, with all the simplicity of his feelings and habits, in reviewing his life, tells us how he was always relapsing into his old propensity of comic writing; "but the thought of this does not disturb me," says he; "for though in any other situation I might have been in easier circumstances, I should never have been so happy." BAYLE is a parent of the modern literary character; he pursued the same course, and early in life adopted the principle "Neither to fear bad fortune, nor have any ardent desires for good." Acquainted with the passions only as their historian, and living only for literature, he

sacrificed to it the two great acquisitions of human pursuits, fortune and a family: But in what country had Bayle not a family and a possession in his fame? HUME and GIBBON had the most perfect conception of the literary character, and they were aware of this important principle in its habits. "My own revenue," said HUME, "will be sufficient for a man of letters, who surely needs less money both for his entertainment and credit than other people." GIBBON observed of himself, "Perhaps the golden mediocrity of my fortune has contributed to fortify my application."

The state of poverty then, desirable in the domestic life of genius, is one in which the cares of property never intrude, and the want of wealth is never perceived. This is not indigence; that state which, however dignified the man of genius himself may be, must inevitably degrade! for the heartless will gibe, and even the compassionate turn aside in contempt. This literary outcast will soon be forsaken even by himself! his own intellect will be clouded over, and his

limbs shrink in the palsy of bodily misery and shame.

Malesuada Fames, et turpis Egestas
Terribiles visu formæ.

Not that in this history of men of genius we are without illustrious examples of those who have even *learnt to want*, that they might emancipate their genius from their necessities? The wisest and the poorest of the Athenians has sent down to us an eternal truth, that "Not to want any thing is an attribute of the Divinity; but man approximates to this perfection by wanting little:" and there have been vast solitary spirits who have sometimes adopted the principle beyond the feeble conception of the opulent, who are not men to become martyrs.

We see ROUSSEAU rushing out of the palace of the financier, selling his watch, copying music by the sheet, and by the mechanical industry of two hours purchasing ten for genius. We may smile at the enthusiasm of young BARRY, who finding himself too constant a haunter of taverns, imagined that this expenditure of time was occasioned by having

money; and to put an end to the conflict, he threw the little he possessed at once into the Liffey; but let us not forget that BARRY, in the maturity of life, confidently began a labour of years, and one of the noblest inventions in his art, a great poem in a picture, with no other resource than what he found by secret labours through the night, in furnishing the shops with those slight and saleable sketches which secured uninterrupted mornings for his genius. SPINOSA, a name as celebrated and perhaps as calumniated as Epicurus, lived in all sorts of abstinence, even of honours, of pensions, and of presents; which, however disguised by kindness, he would not accept, so fearful was this philosopher of a chain! Lodging in a cottage, and obtaining a livelihood by polishing optical glasses, he declared he had never spent more than he earned, and certainly thought there was such a thing as superfluous earnings. At his death his small accounts showed how he had subsisted on a few pence a day, and

"Enjoy'd, spare feast! a radish and an egg."

Poussin persisted in refusing a higher price than that affixed to the back of his pictures, at the time he was living without a domestic. The great oriental scholar, Anquetil de Perron, is a recent example of the literary character carrying his indifference to privations to the very cynicism of poverty; and he seems to exult over his destitution with the same pride as others would expatiate over their possessions. Yet, we must not forget, to use the words of Lord Bacon, that "judging that means were to be spent upon learning, and not learning to be applied to means," De Perron refused the offer of thirty thousand livres for his copy of the Zend-avesta. Writing to some Bramins, he describes his life at Paris to be much like their own. "I subsist on the produce of my literary labours without revenue, establishment, or place. I have no wife nor children; alone, absolutely free, but always the friend of men of probity. In a perpetual war with my senses, I triumph over the attractions of the world or I contemn them."

This ascetic existence is not singular. PARINI, a great modern poet of Italy, whom the Milanese point out to strangers as the glory of their city, lived in the same state of unrepining poverty. Mr. Hobhouse has given us this self-portrait of the poet.

> "Me, non nato a percotere
> Le dure illustri porte,
> Nudo accorrà, ma libero
> Il regno della morte."

Naked, but free! A life of hard deprivations was long that of the illustrious LINNÆUS. Without fortune, to that great mind it never seemed necessary to acquire any. Peregrinating on foot with a stylus, a magnifying glass, and a basket for plants, he shared the rustic meal of the peasant. Never was glory obtained at a cheaper rate! exclaims one of his eulogists. Satisfied with the least of the little, he only felt one perpetual want—that of completing his Floras. Not that LINNÆUS was insensible to his situation, for he gave his name to a little flower in Lapland—the *Linnæa Borealis*, from

the fanciful analogy he discovered between its character and his own early fate, "a little northern plant flowering early, depressed, abject, and long overlooked*." The want of fortune, however, did not deprive this man of genius of his true glory, nor of that statue raised to him in the gardens of the University of Upsal, nor of that solemn eulogy delivered by a crowned head, nor of those medals which his nation struck to commemorate the genius of the three kingdoms of nature!

This, then, is the race who have often smiled at the light regard of their good neighbours when contrasted with their own celebrity; for in poverty and in solitude, such men are not separated from their fame; that is ever proceeding, ever raising a secret, but constant, triumph in their minds.

Yes! Genius undegraded and unexhausted, may, indeed, even in a garret glow in its career; but it must be on the principle which induced

* Mr. Duppa's "Elements of the Science of Botany."

ROUSSEAU solemnly to renounce writing "par metier." This in the *Journal des Sçavans* he once attempted, but found himself quite inadequate to "the profession*." In a garret, the author of the "Studies of Nature," as he exultingly tells us, arranged his work. "It was in a little garret, in the new street of St. Etienne du Mont, where I resided four years, in the midst of physical and domestic afflictions. But there I enjoyed the most exquisite pleasures of my life, amid profound solitude and an enchanting horizon. There I put the finishing hand to my 'Studies of Nature,' and there I published them." Pope, one day taking his usual walk with Harte in the Hay-market, desired him to enter a little shop, where going up three pair of stairs into a small room, Pope said, "In this garret, ADDISON wrote his 'Campaign!'" To the feelings of the poet, this garret had become a consecrated spot; Genius seemed more itself placed in contrast with its miserable locality!

* Twice he repeated this resolution. See his works, vol. xxxi. p. 283; vol. xxxii. p. 90.

The man of genius wrestling with oppressive fortune, who follows the avocations of an author as a precarious source of existence, should take as the model of the authorial life, that of Dr. JOHNSON. The dignity of the literary character was as deeply associated with his feelings, and the "reverence thyself" as present to his mind, when doomed to be one of the *Helots* of literature, by Osborn, Cave, and Millar, as when, in the honest triumph of Genius, he repelled a tardy adulation of the lordly Chesterfield. Destitute of this ennobling principle, the author sinks into the tribe of those rabid adventurers of the pen, who have masked the degraded form of the literary character under the assumed title of "authors by profession*"—the GUTHRIES, the RALPHS, and the AMHURSTS. "There are worse evils,

* From an original letter which I have published from GUTHRIE to a minister of state, this modern phrase appears to have been his own invention. The principle unblushingly avowed, required the sanction of a respectable designation. I have preserved it in "Calamities of Authors."

for the literary man," says a living author, who himself is the true model of the great literary character—"than neglect, poverty, imprisonment, and death. There are even more pitiable objects than Chatterton himself with the poison at his lips."—"I should die with hunger, were I at peace with the world!" exclaimed a corsair of literature—and dashed his pen into the black flood before him of soot and gall.

In substituting fortune for the object of his designs, the man of genius deprives himself of those heats of inspiration reserved for him who lives for himself; the *mollia tempora fandi* of Art. If he be subservient to the public taste, without daring to raise it to his own, the creature of his times has not the choice of his subjects, which choice is itself a sort of invention. A task-worker ceases to think his own thoughts. The stipulated price and time are weighing on his pen or his pencil, while the hour-glass is dropping its hasty sands. If the man of genius would be wealthy and even luxurious, another

fever besides the thirst of glory torments him. Such insatiable desires create many fears, and a mind in fear is a mind in slavery. In one of SHAKESPEARE'S sonnets he pathetically laments this compulsion of his necessities which forced him to the trade of pleasing the public; and he illustrates this degradation by a novel image. "Chide Fortune," cries the bard,—

> "The guilty goddess of my harmless deeds,
> That did not better for my life provide
> Than public means which public manners breeds;
> Thence comes it that my name receives a brand;
> *And almost thence my nature is subdued*
> *To what it works in,* LIKE THE DYER'S HAND."

Such is the fate of that author, who, in his variety of task-works, blue, yellow, and red, lives without ever having shown his own natural complexion. We hear the eloquent truth from one who has alike shared in the bliss of composition, and the misery of its "daily bread." "A single hour of composition won from the business of the day, is worth more than the whole day's toil of him who works at the *trade*

of literature; in the one case, the spirit comes joyfully to refresh itself, like a hart to the water-brooks; in the other, it pursues its miserable way, panting and jaded with the dogs of hunger and necessity behind*." We trace the fate of all task-work in the history of POUSSIN, when called on to reside at the French court. Labouring without intermission, sometimes on one thing and sometimes on another, and hurried on in things which required both time and thought—he saw too clearly the fatal tendency of such a life, and exclaimed with ill suppressed bitterness, "If I stay long in this country, I shall turn dauber like the rest here." The great artist abruptly returned to Rome to regain the possession of his own thoughts.

It has been a question with some, more indeed abroad than at home, whether the art of instructing mankind by the press would not be less suspicious in its character, were it less interested in one of its prevalent motives? Some noble self-denials of this kind are recorded.

* Quarterly Review, vol. viii. p. 538.

The principle of emolument will produce the industry which furnishes works for popular demand; but it is only the principle of honour which can produce the lasting works of genius. BOILEAU seems to censure Racine for having accepted money for one of his dramas, while he, who was not rich, gave away his polished poems to the public. He seems desirous of raising the art of writing to a more disinterested profession than any other, requiring no fees for the professors. OLIVET presented his elaborate edition of Cicero to the world, requiring no other remuneration than its glory. MILTON did not compose his immortal work for his trifling copyright; and LINNÆUS sold his labours for a single ducat. The Abbé MABLY, the author of many political and moral works, supported the dignity of the literary character; for while he lived on little, he would accept only a few presentation-copies from the booksellers. But, since we have become a nation of book-collectors, and since there exists, as Mr. Coleridge describes it, "a

reading public"—this principle of honour is altered. Wealthy, and even noble authors are proud to receive the largest tribute to their genius, because this tribute is the certain evidence of the number who pay it. The property of a book, therefore, represents to the literary candidate the collective force of the thousands of voters on whose favour his claims can only exist. This change in the affairs of the literary republic, in our country, was felt by GIBBON, who has fixed on "the patronage of booksellers" as the standard of public opinion: "the measure of their liberality," he says, "is the least ambiguous test of our common success." The philosopher accepted it as a substitute for that "friendship, or favour of princes, of which he could not boast." The same opinion was held by JOHNSON. Yet, looking on the present state of English literature, the most profuse, perhaps, in Europe, we cannot refrain from thinking, that the "patronage of booksellers" is frequently injurious to the great interests of literature.

The dealers in enormous speculative purchases are only subservient to the spirit of the times. If they are the purveyors, they are also the panders of public taste; and their vaunted patronage only extends to popular subjects; while their urgent demands are sure to produce hasty manufactures. A precious work on a recondite subject, which may have consumed the life of its author, no bookseller can patronise; and whenever such a work is published, the author has rarely survived the long season of the public's neglect. While popular works, after some few years of celebrity, have at length been discovered not worth the repairs nor the renewal of their lease of fame, the neglected work of another cast rises in value and rarity. The literary work which requires the greatest skill and difficulty, and the longest labour, is not commercially valued with that hasty, spurious novelty, for which the taste of the public is craving, from the strength of its disease rather than of its appetite. ROUSSEAU observed, that his musical opera, the work of five or six weeks,

brought him as much money as he had received for his "Emile," which had cost him twenty years of meditation, and three years of composition. This single fact represents a hundred. So fallacious are public opinion, and the patronage of booksellers!

Such, then, is the inadequate remuneration of a life devoted to literature; and notwithstanding the more general interest excited by its productions within the last century, it has not materially altered their situation in society, for who is deceived by the trivial exultation of the gay sparkling scribbler who lately assured us that authors now dip their pens in silver ink-standishes, and have a valet for an amanuensis? Fashionable writers must necessarily get out of fashion; it is the inevitable fate of the material and the manufacturer. An eleemosynary fund can provide no permanent relief for the age and sorrows of the unhappy men of science and literature; and an author may even have composed a work which shall be read by the next generation as well as the

present, and still be left in a state even of pauperism. These victims perish in silence! No one has attempted to suggest even a palliative for this great evil; and when I asked the greatest genius of our age to propose some relief for this general suffering, a sad and convulsive nod, a shrug that sympathised with the misery of so many brothers, and an avowal that even he could not invent one, was all that genius had to alleviate the forlorn state of the literary character.

The only man of genius who has thrown out a hint for improving the situation of the literary man, is ADAM SMITH. In that passage in his "Wealth of Nations" to which I have already referred, he says, that "Before the invention of the art of printing, the only employment by which a man of letters could make any thing by his talents was that of a *public or a private teacher*, or by communicating to other people the various and useful knowledge which he had acquired himself; and this surely is a more honourable, a more useful, and in general

even a more profitable employment than that other *of writing for a bookseller*, to which the art of printing has given occasion." We see the political economist, alike insensible to the dignity of the literary character, incapable of taking a just view of its glorious avocation. To obviate the personal wants attached to the occupations of an author, he would, more effectually than skilfully, get rid of authorship itself. This is not to restore the limb, but to amputate it. It is not the preservation of existence, but its annihilation. His friends Hume and Robertson must have turned from this page humiliated and indignant. They could have supplied Adam Smith with a truer conception of the literary character, of its independence, its influence, and its glory.

I have projected a plan for the alleviation of the state of those authors who are not blessed with a patrimony. The *trade* connected with literature is carried on by men who are usually not literate, and the generality of the publishers of books, unlike all other tradesmen, are often

the worst judges of their own wares. Were it practicable, as I believe it to be, that authors and men of letters could themselves be booksellers, the public would derive this immediate benefit from the scheme; a deluge of worthless or indifferent books would be turned away, and the name of the literary publisher would be a pledge for the value of every new book. Every literary man would choose his own favourite department, and we should learn from him as well as from his books.

Against this project it may be urged that literary men are ill adapted to attend to the regular details of trade, and that the great capitalists in the book-business have not been men of literature. But this plan is not suggested for accumulating a great fortune, or for the purpose of raising up a new class of tradesmen. It is not designed to make authors wealthy, for that would inevitably extinguish great literary exertion, but only to make them independent, as the best means to preserve exertion. The details of trade are not even to

reach him. The poet GESNER, a bookseller, left his *librairie* to the care of his admirable wife. His own works, the elegant editions which issued from his press, and the value of manuscripts, were the objects of his attention.

On the continent many of the dealers in books have been literary men. At the memorable expulsion of the French protestants on the edict of Nantes, their expatriated literary men flew to the shores of England, and the free provinces of Holland; and it was in Holland that this colony of *litterateurs* established magnificent printing-houses, and furnished Europe with editions of the native writers of France, often preferable to the originals, and even wrote the best works of that time. At that memorable period in our own history, when two thousand non-conformists were ejected on St. Bartholomew's day from the national establishment, the greater part were men of learning, who, deprived of their livings, were destitute of any means of existence. These scholars were compelled to look to some profitable

occupation, and for the greater part they fixed on trades connected with literature; some became eminent booksellers and continued to be voluminous writers, without finding their studies interrupted by their commercial arrangements. The details of trade must be left to others; the hand of a child can turn a vast machine, and the object here proposed would be lost, if authors sought to become merely booksellers.

Whenever the public of Europe shall witness such a new order of men among their booksellers, they will have less to read, but more to remember. Their opinions will be less fluctuating, and their knowledge will come to them with more maturity. Men of letters will fly to the house of the bookseller who in that class of literature in which he deals, will himself be not the least eminent member.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The matrimonial state of literature.—Matrimony said not to be well suited to the domestic life of genius.—Celibacy a concealed cause of the early querulousness of men of genius.—Of unhappy unions.—Not absolutely necessary that the wife should be a literary woman.—Of the docility and susceptibility of the higher female character.—A picture of a literary wife.

MATRIMONY has often been considered as a condition not well suited to the domestic life of genius, accompanied as it must be by many embarrassments for the head and the heart. It was an axiom with Fuessli, the Swiss artist, that the marriage state is incompatible with a high cultivation of the fine arts; and such appears to have been the feeling of most artists. When MICHAEL ANGELO was asked why he

did not marry, he replied, "I have espoused my art; and it occasions me sufficient domestic cares, for my works shall be my children. What would Bartholomeo Ghiberti have been, had he not made the gates of St. John? His children consumed his fortune, but his gates, worthy to be the gates of Paradise, remain." The three Caraccis refused the conjugal bond on the same principle, dreading the interruptions of domestic life. Their crayons and paper were always on their dining-table. Careless of fortune, they determined never to hurry over their works, in order that they might supply the ceaseless demands of a family. We discover the same principle operating in our own times. When a young painter, who had just married, told Sir Joshua that he was preparing to pursue his studies in Italy, that great painter exclaimed, "Married! then you are ruined as an artist!"

The same principle has influenced literary men. Sir Thomas Bodley had a smart altercation with his first librarian, insisting that he

should not marry, maintaining its absurdity in the man who had the perpetual care of a public library; and Woodward left as one of the express conditions of his lecturer, that he was not to be a married man. They imagined that their private affairs would interfere with their public duties. PEIRESC, the great French collector, refused marriage, convinced that the cares of a family were too absorbing for the freedom necessary to literary pursuits, and claimed likewise a sacrifice of fortune incompatible with his great designs. BOYLE, who would not suffer his studies to be interrupted by "household affairs," lived as a boarder with his sister, Lady Ranelagh. Newton, Locke, Leibnitz, Bayle, and Hobbes, and Hume, and Gibbon, and Adam Smith, decided for celibacy. These great authors placed their happiness in their celebrity.

This debate, for the present topic has sometimes warmed into one, is in truth ill adapted for controversy. The heart is more concerned

in its issue than any espoused doctrine terminating in partial views. Look into the domestic annals of genius—observe the variety of positions into which the literary character is thrown in the nuptial state. Cynicism will not always obtain a sullen triumph, nor prudence always be allowed to calculate away some of the richer feelings of our nature. It is not an axiom that literary characters must necessarily institute a new order of celibacy. The sentence of the apostle pronounces, that "the forbidding to marry is a doctrine of devils." WESLEY, who published "Thoughts on a single Life," advised some "to remain single for the kingdom of heaven's sake; but the precept," he adds, "is not for the many." So indecisive have been the opinions of the most curious inquirers concerning the matrimonial state, whenever a great destination has engaged their consideration.

One position we way assume, that the studies, and even the happiness of the pursuits of men

of genius, are powerfully influenced by the domestic associate of their lives.

They rarely pass through the age of love without its passion. Even their Delias and their Amandas are often the shadows of some real object; for as Shakespeare's experience told him,

> "Never durst poet touch a pen to write,
> Until his ink were temper'd with love's sighs."

Their imagination is perpetually colouring those pictures of domestic happiness on which they delight to dwell. He who is no husband sighs for that tenderness which is at once bestowed and received; and tears will start in the eyes of him who in becoming a child among children, yet feels that he is no father! These deprivations have usually been the concealed cause of the querulous melancholy of the literary character.

Such was the real occasion of SHENSTONE's unhappiness. In early life he had been captivated by a young lady adapted to be both

the muse and the wife of the poet, and their mutual sensibility lasted for some years. It lasted until she died. It was in parting from her that he first sketched his "Pastoral Ballad." SHENSTONE had the fortitude to refuse marriage. His spirit could not endure that she should participate in that life of self-privations to which he was doomed; but his heart was not locked up in the ice of celibacy, and his plaintive love-songs and elegies flowed from no fictitious source. "It is long since," says he, "I have considered myself as *undone.* The world will not perhaps consider me in that light entirely till I have married my maid."

THOMSON met a reciprocal passion in his Amanda, while the full tenderness of his heart was ever wasting itself like waters in a desert. As we have been made little acquainted with this part of the history of the poet of the Seasons, I shall give his own description of those deep feelings from a manuscript letter written to Mallet. "To turn my eyes a softer way, to you know who—absence sighs it to me.

What is my heart made of? a soft system of low nerves, too sensible for my quiet—capable of being very happy or very unhappy, I am afraid the last will prevail. Lay your hand upon a kindred heart, and despise me not. I know not what it is, but she dwells upon my thought in a mingled sentiment, which is the sweetest, the most intimately pleasing the soul can receive, and which I would wish never to want towards some dear object or another. To have always some secret darling idea to which one can still have recourse amidst the noise and nonsense of the world, and which never fails to touch us in the most exquisite manner, is an art of happiness that fortune cannot deprive us of. This may be called romantic; but whatever the cause is, the effect is really felt. Pray, when you write, tell me when you saw her, and with the pure eye of a friend, when you see her again, whisper that I am her most humble servant."

Even POPE was enamoured of a "scornful

lady;" and, as Johnson observed, "polluted his will with female resentment." JOHNSON himself, we are told by one who knew him, "had always a metaphysical passion for one princess or other,—the rustic Lucy Porter, or the haughty Molly Aston, or the sublimated methodistic Hill Boothby; and, lastly, the more charming Mrs. Thrale." Even in his advanced age, at the height of his celebrity, we hear his cries of lonely wretchedness. "I want every comfort; my life is very solitary and very cheerless. Let me know that I have yet a friend—let us be kind to one another." But the "kindness" of distant friends is like the polar sun—too far removed to warm us. Those who have eluded the individual tenderness of the female, are tortured by an aching void in their feelings. The stoic AKENSIDE, in his "Odes," has preserved the history of a life of genius in a series of his own feelings. One entitled, "At Study," closes with these memorable lines:

"Me

" Me though no peculiar fair
Touches with a lover's care ;
Though the pride of my desire
Asks immortal friendship's name,
Asks the palm of honest fame
And the old heroic lyre ;
Though the day have smoothly gone,
Or to letter'd leisure known,
Or in social duty spent ;
Yet at eve my lonely breast
Seeks in vain for perfect rest,
Languishes for true content."

If ever a man of letters lived in a state of energy and excitement which might raise him above the atmosphere of social love, it was assuredly the enthusiast, THOMAS HOLLIS, who, solely devoted to literature and to republicanism, was occcupied in furnishing Europe and America with editions of his favourite authors. He would not marry, lest marriage should interrupt the labours of his platonic politics. But his extraordinary memoirs, while they show an intrepid mind in a robust frame, bear witness to the self-tormentor who had trodden down the natural bonds of domestic life. Hence the deep "de-

jection of his spirits;" those incessant cries, that he has "no one to advise, assist, or cherish those magnanimous pursuits in him." At length he retreated into the country, in utter hopelessness. "I go not into the country for attentions to agriculture as such, nor attentions of interest of any kind, which I have ever despised as such; but as a *used man*, to pass the remainder of a life in tolerable sanity and quiet, after having given up the flower of it, voluntarily, day, week, month, year after year, successive to each other, to public service, and being no longer able to sustain, in *body or mind*, the labours that I have chosen to go through without falling speedily into *the greatest disorders*, and it might be *imbecility itself*. This is not colouring, but the exact plain truth."

> "Poor moralist, and what art thou?
> A solitary fly!
> Thy joys no glittering female meets,
> No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets."

Assuredly it would not have been a question whether these literary characters should have

married, had not MONTAIGNE, when a widower, declared that "he would not marry a second time, though it were wisdom itself;" but the airy Gascon has not disclosed how far *Madame* was concerned in this anathema.

If the literary man unite himself to a woman whose tastes and whose temper are adverse to his pursuits, he must courageously prepare for a martyrdom. Should a female mathematician be united to a poet, it is probable that she would be left amidst her abstractions, to demonstrate to herself how many a specious diagram fails when brought into its mechanical operation; or discovering the infinite varieties of a curve, she might take occasion to deduce her husband's versatility. If she become as jealous of his books as other wives might be of his mistresses, she may act the virago even over his innocent papers. The wife of Bishop COOPER, while her husband was employed on his Lexicon, one day consigned the volume of many years to the flames, and obliged that scholar to begin a second siege of Troy in a second Lexicon. The wife

of WHITELOCKE often destroyed his MSS., and the marks of her nails have come down to posterity in the numerous *lacerations* still gaping in his "Memorials." The learned Sir HENRY SAVILLE, who devoted more than half his life, and nearly ten thousand pounds to his magnificent edition of St. Chrysostom, led a very uneasy life between the saint and her ladyship. What with her tenderness for him, and her own want of amusement, Saint Chrysostom, it appears, incurred more than one danger.

Genius has not preserved itself from the errors and infirmities of matrimonial connexions. The energetic character of DANTE could neither soften nor control the asperity of his lady; and when that great poet lived in exile, she never cared to see him more, though he was the father of her six children. The internal state of the house of DOMENICHINO afflicted that great artist with many sorrows. He had married a beauty of high birth, and extreme haughtiness, and of the most avaricious disposition. The artist had beheld two sons sink into untimely graves by

the obstinate mother refusing them sufficient nourishment, that they might (as she said) become delicate and slender; and when he would not suffer their daughter to meet the same fate, her clamours raised up two villainous brothers, who were perpetually threatening his life. When at Naples, he himself dreaded lest the avaricious passion of his wife should not be able to resist the offers she received to poison him, and he was compelled to provide and dress his own food. It is believed he died of poison. What a picture has Passeri left of the domestic interior of this great artist! *Così fra mille crepacuori morì uno de' più eccellenti artefici del mundo; che oltre al suo valore pittorico avrebbe più d'ogni altri maritato di viver sempre per l'onestà personale.* "So perished, amidst a thousand heart-breakings, the most excellent of artists; who besides his worth as a painter, deserved as much as any one to have lived for his excellence as a man."

MILTON carried nothing of the greatness of his mind in the choice of his wives. His first

wife was the object of sudden fancy. He left the metropolis, and unexpectedly returned a married man, and united to a woman of such uncongenial dispositions, that the romp was frightened at the literary habits of the great poet, found his house solitary, beat his nephews, and ran away after a single month's residence! To this circumstance we owe his famous treatise on Divorce; and a party (by no means extinct), who having made as ill choices in their wives, were for divorcing, as fast as they had been for marrying, calling themselves *Miltonists.*

When we find that MOLIERE, so skilful in human life, married a girl from his own troop, who made him experience all those bitter disgusts and ridiculous embarrassments which he himself played off at the theatre; that ADDISON'S fine taste in morals and in life, could suffer the ambition of a courtier to prevail with himself to seek a countess, whom he describes under the stormy character of Oceana, and who drove him contemptuously into solitude, and

shortened his days; and that STEELE, warm and thoughtless, was united to a cold precise "Miss Prue," as he himself calls her, and from whom he never parted without bickerings; in all these cases we censure the great men, not their wives.* ROUSSEAU has honestly confessed his error. He had united himself to a low illiterate woman; and when he retreated into solitude, he felt the weight which he carried with him. He laments that he had not educated his wife: "In a docile age, I could have adorned her mind with talents and knowledge, which would have more closely united us in retirement. We should not then have felt the intolerable tædium of a tête-à-tête; it is in solitude one feels the advantage of living with another who can think." Thus Rousseau confesses the fatal error, and indicates the right principle.

Yet it seems not absolutely necessary for the domestic happiness of the literary character, that his wife should be a literary woman.

* See Curiosities of Literature, for anecdotes of "Literary Wives."

TYCHO BRAHE, noble by birth as well as genius, married the daughter of a peasant. By which means that great man obtained two points essential for his abstract pursuits; he acquired an obedient wife, and freed himself of his noble relatives, who would no longer hold an intercourse with the man who was spreading their family honours into more ages than perhaps they could have traced them backwards. The lady of WIELAND was a pleasing domestic person, who without reading her husband's works, knew he was a great poet. Wieland was apt to exercise his imagination in declamatory invectives and bitter amplifications; and the writer of this account, in perfect German taste, assures us, "that many of his felicities of diction were thus struck out at a heat." During this frequent operation of his genius, the placable temper of Mrs. Wieland overcame the orgasm of the German bard, merely by persisting in her admiration and her patience. When the burst was over, Wieland

himself was so charmed by her docility, that he usually closed with giving up all his opinions.

There is another sort of homely happiness, aptly described in the plain words of BISHOP NEWTON. He found "the study of sacred and classic authors ill agreed with butchers' and bakers' bills;" and when the prospect of a bishopric opened on him, "more servants, more entertainments, a better table, &c." it became necessary to look out for "some clever sensible woman to be his wife, who would lay out his money to the best advantage, and be careful and tender of his health; a friend and companion at all hours, and who would be happier in staying at home than be perpetually gadding abroad." Such are the wives, not adapted to be the votaries, but who may be the faithful companions through life, even of a man of genius.

But in the character of the higher female we may discover a constitutional faculty of docility and enthusiasm, which has varied with the genius of different ages. It is the opinion of an

elegant metaphysician, that the mind of the female adopts and familiarises itself with ideas more easily than that of man, and hence the facility with which the sex contract, or lose habits, and accommodate their minds to new situations. Politics, war, and learning, are equally objects of attainment to their delightful susceptibility, and one may imagine that Love, if he were to pass through an Ovidian metamorphosis, would show himself in the fancied transparency of the cameleon. When the art of government directed the feelings of a woman, see we Aspasia eloquent, and with the genius of Pericles, instructing the Archons; Portia, the wife of the republican Brutus, devouring burning coals; and the wife of Lucan, transcribing and correcting the Pharsalia, before the bust of the poet, which she had placed on her bed, that his very figure might never be absent. When universities were opened to the sex, they acquired academic glory; and the wives of military men have shared in the perils of the field; or, like Anna Comnena and our Mrs.

Hutchinson, have become even their historians, writing with all the hero's or the patriot's devotedness to their country. In the age of love and sympathy, the female often receives an indelible character from her literary associate. His pursuits become the objects of her thoughts, and he observes his own tastes reflected in his family; much less through his own influence, for his solitary labours often preclude him from forming them, than by that image of his own genius—the mother of his children! The subjects, the very books which enter into his literary occupation, are cherished by her imagination; a feeling finely opened by the lady of the author of Sandford and Merton: "My ideas of my husband," she said, "are so much associated with his *books*, that to part with them would be as it were breaking some of the last ties which still connect me with so beloved an object. The being in the midst of books he has been accustomed to read, and which contain his *marks* and *notes*, will still give him *a sort of existence* with *me*. Unin-

telligible as such fond chimeras may appear to many people, I am persuaded they are not so to you."

With what simplicity Meta Mollers, the wife of Klopstock, in her German-English, describes to Richardson, the novelist, the manner in which she passes her day with her poet; she tells him, that "she is always present at the birth of the young verses, which begin by fragments, here and there, of a subject with which his soul is just then filled. Persons who live as we do have no need of two chambers; we are always in the same: I with my little work, still! still! only regarding sometimes my husband's face, which is so venerable at that time with tears of devotion, and all the sublimity of the subject—my husband reading me his young verses, and suffering my criticisms."

The picture of a literary wife of antiquity has descended to us, touched by the domestic pencil of genius, in the susceptible CALPHURNIA, the lady of the younger PLINY. "Her affec-

tion for me (he says) has given her a turn to books: her passion will increase with our days, for it is not my youth or my person, which time gradually impairs, but my reputation and my glory, of which she is enamoured."

I have been told that BUFFON, notwithstanding his favourite seclusion in his old tower in the midst of his garden, acknowledged to a friend, that his lady had a considerable influence over his compositions: "Often," said he, "when I cannot please myself, and am impatient at the disappointment, Madame de Buffon reanimates my exertion, or withdraws me to repose for a short interval; I return to my pen refreshed, and aided by her advice."

GESNER declared that whatever were his talents, the person who had most contributed to develope them was his wife. She is unknown to the public; but the history of the mind of such a woman is discovered in the "Letters of Gesner and his Family." While GESNER gave himself up entirely to his favourite arts, drawing, painting, etching, and poetry, his wife

would often reanimate a genius that was apt to despond in its attempts, and often exciting him to new productions, her sure and delicate taste was attentively consulted by the poet-painter—but she combined the most practical good sense with the most feeling imagination. This forms the rareness of the character—for this same woman, who united with her husband in the education of their children, to relieve him from the interruptions of common business, carried on alone the concerns of his house in *la librairie.* Her correspondence with her son, a young artist travelling for his studies, opens what an old poet comprehensively terms "a gathered mind." Imagine a woman attending to the domestic economy, and the commercial details, yet withdrawing out of this business of life into the more elevated pursuits of her husband, and at the same time combining with all this the cares and counsels which she bestowed on her son to form the artist and the man.

To know this incomparable woman we must hear her. "Consider your father's precepts

as oracles of wisdom; they are the result of the experience he has collected, not only of life, but of that art which he has acquired simply by his own industry." She would not have her son suffer his strong affection to herself to absorb all other sentiments. "Had you remained at home, and been habituated under your mother's auspices to employments merely domestic, what advantage would you have acquired? I own we should have passed some delightful winter evenings together; but your love for the arts, and my ambition to see my sons as much distinguished for their talents as their virtues, would have been a constant source of regret at your passing your time in a manner so little worthy of you."

How profound is her observation on the strong but confined attachments of a youth of genius. "I have frequently remarked, with some regret, the excessive attachment you indulge towards those who see and feel as you do yourself, and the total neglect with which you seem to treat every one else. I should re-

proach a man with such a fault who was destined to pass his life in a small and unvarying circle; but in an artist, who has a great object in view, and whose country is the whole world, this disposition seems to me likely to produce a great number of inconveniencies. Alas! my son, the life you have hitherto led in your father's house has been in fact a pastoral life, and not such a one as was necessary for the education of a man whose destiny summons him to the world."

And when her son, after meditating on some of the most glorious productions of art, felt himself, as he says, "disheartened and cast down at the unattainable superiority of the artist, and that it was only by reflecting on the immense labour and continued efforts which such master-pieces must have required, that I regained my courage and my ardour," she observes, "this passage, my dear son, is to me as precious as gold, and I send it to you again, because I wish you to impress it strongly on your mind. The remembrance of this may

also be a useful preservative from too great confidence in your abilities, to which a warm imagination may sometimes be liable, or from the despondence you might occasionally feel from the contemplation of grand originals. Continue, therefore, my dear son, to form a sound judgment and a pure taste from your own observations; your mind, while yet young and flexible, may receive whatever impressions you wish. Be careful that your abilities do not inspire in you too much confidence, lest it should happen to you as it has to many others, that they have never possessed any greater merit than that of having good abilities."

One more extract, to preserve an incident which may touch the heart of genius. This extraordinary woman, whose characteristic is that of strong sense combined with delicacy of feeling, would check her German sentimentality at the moment she was betraying those emotions in which the imagination is so powerfully mixed up with the associated feelings. Arriving at their cottage at Sihlwald,

she proceeds—"On entering the parlour three small pictures, painted by you, met my eyes. I passed some time in contemplating them. It is now a year, thought I, since I saw him trace these pleasing forms; he whistled and sang, and I saw them grow under his pencil; now he is far, far from us.—In short, I had the weakness to press my lips on one of these pictures. You well know, my dear son, that I am not much addicted to scenes of a sentimental turn; but to-day, while I considered your works, I could not restrain this little impulse of maternal feelings. Do not, however, be apprehensive that the tender affection of a mother will ever lead me too far, or that I shall suffer my mind to be too powerfully impressed with the painful sensations to which your absence gives birth. My reason convinces me that it is for your welfare that you are now in a place where your abilities will have opportunities of unfolding, and where you can become great in your art."

Such was the incomparable wife and mother of the GESNERS! Will it now be a question

whether matrimony be incompatible with the cultivation of the arts? A wife who reanimates the drooping genius of her husband, and a mother who is inspired by the ambition of beholding her sons eminent, is she not the real being which the ancients personified in their Muse?

CHAPTER XIX.

Literary friendships—In early life.—How different from those of men of the world.—They suffer an unrestrained communication of their ideas, and bear reprimands and exhortations.—Unity of feelings.—A sympathy not of manners but of feelings.—Admit of dissimilar characters.—Their peculiar glory.—Their sorrow.

AMONG the virtues which literature inspires, is often that of the most romantic friendship. The delirium of love, and even its lighter caprices, are incompatible with the pursuits of the student; but to feel friendship like a passion is necessary to the mind of genius alternately elated and depressed, ever prodigal of feeling and excursive in knowledge.

The qualities which constitute literary friendship, compared with those of men of the world, must render it a sentiment as rare as love itself, which it resembles in that intellec-

tual tenderness in which both so deeply participate.

Born "in the dews of their youth," this friendship will not expire on their tomb. In the school or the college this immortality begins; and engaged in similar studies, should even one excel the other, he will find in him the protector of his fame; as ADDISON did in STEELE, WEST in GRAY, and GRAY in MASON. Thus PETRARCH was the guide of Boccaccio, thus BOCCACCIO became the defender of his master's genius. Perhaps friendship is never more intense than in an intercourse of minds of ready counsels and inspiring ardours. United in the same pursuits, but directed by an unequal experience, the imperceptible superiority interests, without mortifying. It is a counsel, it is an aid; in whatever form it shows itself, it has nothing of the malice of rivalry.

A beautiful picture of such a friendship among men of genius offers itself in the history of MIGNARD, the great French painter, and DU FRESNOY, the great critic of the art itself. DU

FRESNOY, abandoned in utter scorn by his stern father, an apothecary, for his entire devotion to his seductive art, lived at Rome in voluntary poverty, till MIGNARD, his old fellow-student, arrived, when they became known by the name of "the inseparables." The talents of the friends were different, but their studies were the same. Their days melted away together in drawing from the ancient statues and the basso-relievos, in studying in the galleries of paintings, or among the villas which embellish the environs of Rome. One roof sheltered them, and one table supplied their sober meal. Light were the slumbers which closed each day, each the pleasing image of the former. But this remarkable friendship was not a simple sentiment which limited the views of "the Inseparables," for with them it was a perpetual source of mutual usefulness. They gave accounts to each other of whatever they observed, and carefully noted their own defects. DU FRESNOY, so critical in the theory of the art, was unsuccessful in the practical parts. His delight in poetical

composition had retarded the progress of his pictorial powers. Not having been taught the handling of his pencil, he worked with difficulty; but MIGNARD succeeded in giving him a freer command and a more skilful touch; while DU FRESNOY, who was the more literary man, enriched the invention of MIGNARD by reading to him an Ode of Anacreon or Horace, a passage from the Iliad or Odyssey, or the Æneid, or the Jerusalem Delivered, which offered subjects for the artist's invention, who would throw out five or six different sketches on the same subject; a habit which so highly improved the inventive powers of MIGNARD, that he could compose a fine picture with playful facility. Thus they lived together, mutually enlightening each other. MIGNARD supplied DU FRESNOY with all that fortune had refused him; and, when he was no more, perpetuated his fame, which he felt was a portion of his own celebrity, by publishing his posthumous poem, *De Arte Graphica**; a

* La Vie de Pierre Mignard, par L'Abbé de Monville, the work of an amateur.

poem, which Mason has made readable by his versification, and Reynolds even interesting by his invaluable commentary.

In the poem COWLEY composed on the death of his friend HARVEY, this stanza opens a pleasing scene of two young literary friends engaged in their midnight studies.

"Say, for you saw us, ye immortal lights!
How oft unwearied have we spent the nights,
Till the Ledæan stars, so famed for love,
Wonder'd at us from above.
We spent them not in toys, in lust, or wine;
But search of deep philosophy,
Wit, eloquence, and poetry;
Arts which I loved, for they, my friend, were thine."

Touched by a personal knowledge of this union of genius and affection, even MALONE commemorates, with unusual warmth, the literary friendships of Sir Joshua Reynolds; and with a felicity of fancy not often indulged, has raised an unforced parallel between the bland wisdom of Sir Joshua and the "mitis sapientia Lælî." "What the illustrious Scipio was to Lælius, was the all-knowing and all-accom-

plished BURKE to REYNOLDS;" and what the elegant Lælius was to his master Panætius, whom he gratefully protected, and to his companion, the poet Lucilius, whom he patronised, was REYNOLDS to JOHNSON, of whom he was the scholar and friend, and to GOLDSMITH, whom he loved and aided.

Count AZARA mourns with equal tenderness and force over the memory of the artist and the writer MENGS. "The most tender friendships would call forth tears in this sad duty of scattering flowers on his tomb; but the shade of my extinct friend warns me not to be satisfied with dropping flowers and tears—they are useless; and I would rather accomplish his wishes, in making known the author and his works."

I am infinitely delighted by a circumstance communicated to me by one who had visited GLEIM, the German poet, who seems to have been a creature made up altogether of sensibility. His many and illustrious friends he had never forgotten, and to the last hour of a life prolonged beyond his eightieth year, he pos-

sessed those interior feelings which can make even an old man an enthusiast. There seemed for GLEIM to be no extinction in friendship when the friend was no more; and he had invented a singular mode of gratifying his feelings of literary friendships. The visitor found the old man in a room of which the wainscot was pannelled, as we still see among us in ancient houses. In every pannel GLEIM had inserted the portrait of a friend, and the apartment was crowded. "You see," said the gray-haired poet, "that I never have lost a friend, and am sitting always among them."

Such friendships can never be the lot of men of the world; for their source lies in the interior affections and the intellectual feelings. Literary friendship has no convivial gaieties and factious assemblies. FONTENELLE describes with characteristic delicacy the conversations of such literary friends: "Our days passed like moments; thanks to those pleasures, which, however, are not included in those which are commonly called pleasures." The friend-

ships of the men of society move on the principle of personal interest, but interest can easily separate the interested; or they are cherished to relieve themselves from the listlessness of existence; but as weariness is contagious, the contact of the propagator is watched. Men of the world may look on each other with the same countenances, but not with the same hearts. In the common mart of life intimacies may be found which terminate in complaint and contempt; the more they know one another, the less is their mutual esteem: the feeble mind quarrels with one still more imbecile than itself; the dissolute riot with the dissolute, and they despise their companions, while they too have themselves become despicable.

Literary friendships are marked by another peculiarity; the true philosophical spirit has learnt to bear that shock of contrary opinions which minds less meditative are unequal to encounter. Men of genius live in the unrestrained communication of their ideas, and confide even their caprices with a freedom which

sometimes startles ordinary observers. We see literary men the most opposite in dispositions and opinions, deriving from each other that fulness of knowledge which unfolds the certain, the probable, the doubtful. Topics which break the world into factions and sects; and truths which ordinary men are doomed only to hear from a malignant adversary, they gather from a friend! If neither yields up his opinions to the other, they are at least certain of silence and a hearing; but usually

"The wise, new wisdom from the wise acquire."

This generous freedom, which spares neither reprimands nor exhortation, has often occurred in the intercourse of literary men. HUME and ROBERTSON were engaged in the same studies, but with very opposite principles; yet Robertson declined writing the English history, which he aspired to do, lest it should injure the plans of Hume; a noble sacrifice!

Politics once divided Boccaccio and Petrarch. The poet of Valchiusa had never forgiven the

Florentines for their persecution of his father. By the mediation of BOCCACCIO they now offered to reinstate PETRARCH in his patrimony and his honours. Won over by the tender solicitude of his friend, PETRARCH had consented to return to his country; but with his usual inconstancy of temper, he had again excused himself to the senate of Florence, and again retreated to his solitude. Nor was this all; for the Visconti of Milan had by their flattery and promises seduced PETRARCH to their court; a court, the avowed enemy of Florence. BOCCACCIO, for the honour of literature, of his friend, of his country, indignantly heard of PETRARCH's fatal decision, and addressed him by a letter, the most interesting perhaps which ever passed between two literary friends, who were torn asunder by the momentary passions of the vulgar, but who were still united by that immortal friendship which literature inspires, and by a reverence for that posterity which they knew would concern itself with their affairs.

It was on a journey to Ravenna that Boccaccio first heard the news of Petrarch's abandonment of his country, when he thus vehemently addressed his brother-genius.

"I would be silent, but I cannot: my reverence commands silence, but my indignation speaks. How has it happened that Silvanus (under this name he conceals Petrarch) has forgotten his dignity, the many conversations we had together on the state of Italy, his hatred of the archbishop (Visconti), his love of solitude and freedom, so necessary for study, and has resolved to imprison the Muses at that court? Whom may we trust again, if Silvanus, who once branded *Il Visconti* as the Cruel, a Polyphemus, a Cyclop, has avowed himself his friend, and placed his neck under the yoke of him whose audacity, and pride, and tyranny he so deeply abhorred? How has Visconti obtained that which King Robert, which the pontiff, the emperor, the King of France could not? Am I to conclude that you accepted this favour from a disdain of your fellow-citizens, who once indeed

scorned you, but who have reinstated you in the paternal patrimony of which you had been deprived? I do not disapprove of a just indignation; but I take Heaven to witness, that I believe that no man, whoever he may be, rightly and honestly can labour against his country, whatever be the injury he has received. You will gain nothing by opposing me in this opinion; for if stirred up by the most just indignation, you become the friend of the enemy of your country, unquestionably you will not spur him on to war, nor assist him by your arm, nor by your counsel; yet how can you avoid rejoicing with him, when you hear of the ruins, the conflagrations, the imprisonments, death, and rapine, which he shall spread among us?"

Such was the bold appeal to elevated feelings, and such the keen reproach inspired by that confidential freedom which can only exist in the intercourse of great minds. The literary friendship, or rather adoration of BOCCACCIO for PETRARCH, was not bartered at the cost of his

patriotism: and it is worthy of our notice that PETRARCH, whose personal injuries from an ungenerous republic were rankling in his mind, and whom even the eloquence of Boccaccio could not disunite from his protector Visconti, yet received the ardent reproaches of his friend without anger, though not without maintaining the freedom of his own opinions. PETRARCH replied, that the anxiety of BOCCACCIO for the liberty of his friend was a thought most grateful to him; but he assured Boccaccio that he preserved his freedom, even although it appeared that he bowed under a hard yoke. He hoped that he had not to learn to serve in his old age, he, who had hitherto studied to preserve his independence; but in respect to servitude, he did not know whom it was most displeasing to serve, a tyrant like Visconti, or with Boccaccio, a people of tyrants.*

The unity of feeling is displayed in such memorable associates as BEAUMONT and FLETCHER;

* These interesting letters are preserved in Count Baldelli's Life of Boccaccio, p. 115.

whose labours are so combined, that no critic can detect the mingled production of either; and whose lives are so closely united, that no biographer can compose the memoirs of the one without running into the history of the other. Their days were interwoven as their verses. MONTAIGNE and CHARRON, in the eyes of posterity, are rivals, but such literary friendship knows no rivalry. Such was Montaigne's affection for Charron, that he requested him by his will to bear the arms of the Montaignes; and Charron evinced his gratitude to the manes of his departed friend, by leaving his fortune to the sister of Montaigne.

How pathetically ERASMUS mourns over the death of his beloved Sir Thomas MORE!—"*In Moro mihi videor extinctus*,"—"I seem to see myself extinct in More." It was a melancholy presage of his own death, which shortly after followed. The Doric sweetness and simplicity of old Isaac WALTON, the angler, were reflected in a mind as clear and generous, when Charles COTTON continued the

feelings, rather than the little work of Walton. METASTASIO and FARINELLI called each other *il Gemello,* the Twin; and both delighted to trace the resemblance of their lives and fates, and the perpetual alliance of the verse and the voice. The famous John Baptista PORTA had a love of the mysterious parts of sciences, such as physiognomy, natural magic, the cryptical arts of writing, and projected many curious inventions which astonished his age, and which we have carried to perfection. This extraordinary man saw his fame somewhat diminished by a rumour that his brother John Vincent had a great share in the composition of his works; but this never disturbed him, and Peiresc in an interesting account of a visit to this celebrated Neapolitan, observed, that though now aged and gray-haired, he treated his younger brother as a son. These single-hearted brothers, who would not marry that they might never be separated, knew of but one fame, and that was the fame of Porta.

GOGUET, the author of "The Origin of the

Arts and Sciences," bequeathed his MSS. and his books to his friend Fugere, with whom he had long united his affections and his studies, that his surviving friend might proceed with them: but the author had died of a slow and painful disorder, which Fugere had watched by his side, in silent despair. The sight of those MSS. and books was the friend's death-stroke; half his soul, which had once given them animation, was parted from him, and a few weeks terminated his own days. When LLOYD heard of the death of CHURCHILL, he neither wished to survive him, nor did. The Abbé de St. Pierre gave an interesting proof of literary friendship for Varignon the geometrician. They were of congenial dispositions, and St. Pierre, when he went to Paris, could not endure to part with Varignon, who was too poor to accompany him; and St. Pierre was not rich. A certain income, however moderate, was necessary for the tranquil pursuits of geometry. St. Pierre presented Varignon with a portion of his small income,

accompanied by that delicacy of feeling which men of genius who know each other can best conceive: "I do not give it you," said St. Pierre, "as a salary but as an annuity, that you may be independent, and quit me when you dislike me." The same circumstance occurred between AKENSIDE and DYSON. Dyson, when the poet was in great danger of adding one more illustrious name to the "Calamities of Authors," interposed between him and ill-fortune, by allowing him an annuity of three hundred a year; and, when he found the fame of his literary friend attacked, although not in the habit of composition, he published a defence of his poetical and philosophical character. The name and character of Dyson have been suffered to die away, without a single tribute of even biographical sympathy; as that of LONGUEVILLE the modest patron of BUTLER, in whom that great political satirist found what the careless ingratitude of a court had denied: but in the record of literary glory, the patron's name

should be inscribed by the side of the literary character; for the public incurs an obligation whenever a man of genius is protected.

The statesman Fouquet, deserted by all others, witnessed LA FONTAINE hastening every literary man to the prison-gate. Many have inscribed their works to their disgraced patron, as POPE did so nobly to the Earl of Oxford in the Tower;

> When Int'rest calls off all her sneaking train,
> And all the obliged desert, and all the vain,
> They wait, or to the scaffold, or the cell,
> When the last ling'ring friend has bid farewell.

Literary friendship is a sympathy not of manners, but of feelings. The personal character may happen to be very opposite: the vivacious may be loved by the melancholic, and the wit by the man of learning. He who is vehement and vigorous, will feel himself a double man by the side of the friend who is calm and subtle. When we observe such friendships, we are apt to imagine that they are not real because the characters are dissimilar; but

it is their common tastes and pursuits which form a bond of union. POMPONIUS LÆTUS, so called from his natural good humour, was the close friend of HERMOLAUS BARBARUS, whose saturnine and melancholy dispositions he often exhilarated; the warm, impetuous LUTHER was the beloved friend of the mild and amiable MELANCTHON; the caustic BOILEAU was the companion of RACINE and MOLIÈRE; and France, perhaps, owes the *chefs d'œuvres* of her tragic and her comic poet to her satirist. The delicate taste, and the refining ingenuity of HURD, only attached him the more to the impetuous and dogmatic WARBURTON. No men could be more opposite in personal character than the careless, gay, and hasty STEELE, and the cautious, serious, and elegant ADDISON; yet no literary friendship was more fortunate than their union.

One glory is reserved for literary friendship. The friendship of a great name, indicates the greatness of the character who appeals to it. When SYDENHAM mentioned, as a proof of the

excellence of his method of treating acute diseases, that it had received the approbation of his illustrious friend LOCKE, the philosopher's opinion contributed to the physician's success.

Such have been the friendships of great literary characters; but too true it is, that they have not always contributed thus largely to their mutual happiness. The querulous lament of GLEIM to KLOPSTOCK is too generally participated. As Gleim lay on his death-bed, he addressed the great bard of Germany—"I am dying, dear Klopstock; and as a dying man will I say, in this world we have not lived long enough together and for each other; but in vain would we now recall the past!" What tenderness in the reproach! What self-accusation in its modesty!

CHAPTER XX.

The literary and the personal character.—The personal dispositions of an author may be the reverse of those which appear in his writings.—Erroneous conceptions of the character of distant authors.—Paradoxical appearances in the history of Genius.—Why the character of the man may be opposite to that of his writings.

ARE the personal dispositions of an author discoverable in his writings as those of an artist are imagined to appear in his works, where Michael Angelo is always great, and Raphael ever graceful?

Is the moralist a moral man? Is he malignant who publishes caustic satires? Is he a libertine who composes loose poems? And is he whose imagination delights in terror and in blood, the very monster he paints?

Many licentious writers have led chaste lives.

LA MOTHE LE VAYER wrote two works of a free nature; yet his was the unblemished life of a retired sage. BAYLE is the too faithful compiler of impurities, but he resisted the voluptuousness of the senses as much as Newton. LA FONTAINE wrote tales fertile in intrigues, yet the "bon homme" has not left on record a single ingenious amour of his own. The Queen of NAVARRE'S Tales are gross imitations of Boccaccio's; but she herself was a princess of irreproachable habits, and had given proof of the most rigid virtue; but stories of intrigues, told in a natural style, formed the fashionable literature of the day, and the genius of the female writer was amused in becoming an historian without being an actor. Fortiguerra, the author of the Ricciardetto, abounds with loose and licentious descriptions, and yet neither his manners nor his personal character were stained by the offending freedom of his inventions. SMOLLET'S character is immaculate; yet he has described two scenes which offend even in the license of imagination. Cow-

LEY, who boasts with such gaiety of the versatility of his passion among so many mistresses, wanted even the confidence to address one. Thus, licentious writers may be very chaste persons. The imagination may be a volcano, while the heart is an Alp of ice.

Turn to the moralist—there we find SENECA, an usurer of seven millions, writing on moderate desires on a table of gold. SALLUST, who so eloquently declaims against the licentiousness of the age, was repeatedly accused in the senate of public and habitual debaucheries; and when this inveigher against the spoilers of provinces attained to a remote government, he pillaged like Verres. That "DEMOSTHENES was more capable of recommending than of imitating the virtues of our ancestors," is the observation of Plutarch. LUCIAN, when young, declaimed against the friendship of the great, as another name for servitude; but when his talents procured him a situation under the emperor, he facetiously compared himself to those quacks, who themselves plagued by a perpetual

cough, offer to sell an infallible remedy for one. Sir THOMAS MORE, in his Utopia, declares that no man ought to be punished for his religion; yet in England he became a fierce persecutor, flogging and racking men when his own "true faith" was at the ebb. At the moment the poet ROUSSEAU was giving versions of the Psalms, full of unction, as our Catholic neighbours express it, he was profaning the same pen with infamous epigrams; and an erotic poet of our times has composed night-hymns in churchyards with the same ardour with which he poured forth Anacreontics. Napoleon said of Bernardin St. Pierre, whose writings are so sentimentally beautiful, breathing principles of humanity and social happiness in every page, that he was one of the worst private characters in France. I have heard this from other quarters; it startles one! The pathetic genius of STERNE played about his head, but never reached his heart. Cardinal RICHELIEU wrote "The Perfection of a Christian, or the Life of a Christian;" yet was he

an utter stranger to Gospel maxims; and FREDERICK THE GREAT, when young, published his Anti-Machiavel, and deceived the world by the promise of a pacific reign. This military genius protested against those political arts which he afterwards so adroitly practised, uniting the lion's head with the fox's tail—and thus himself realizing the political monster of Machiavel!

And thus also is it with the personal dispositions of an author, which may be quite the reverse from those which appear in his writings. Johnson would not believe that HORACE was a happy man because his verses were cheerful, any more than he could think POPE so, because the poet is continually informing us of it. It surprised Spence, when Pope told him that ROWE the tragic poet, whom he had considered so solemn a personage, "would laugh all day long, and do nothing else but laugh." Lord Kaimes says, that ARBUTHNOT must have been a great genius, for he exceeded Swift and Addison in drollery, and humorous painting;

although we are informed, he had nothing of that peculiarity in his character. YOUNG, who is constantly contemning preferment in his writings, was all his life pining after it; and the conversation of the sombrous author of the "Night Thoughts" was of the most volatile kind, abounding with trivial puns. He was one of the first who subscribed to the assembly at Wellwyn. Mrs. Carter, who greatly admired his sublime poetry, expressing her surprise at his social converse, he replied—"Madam, there is much difference between writing and talking."

MOLIÈRE, on the contrary, whose humour is so perfectly comic, and even ludicrous, was thoughtful and serious, and perhaps even melancholy. His strongly-featured physiognomy exhibits the face of a great tragic, rather than of a great comic poet. Boileau called Molière "The contemplative man." Those who make the world laugh, often themselves laugh the least. A famous and witty harlequin of France was overcome with hypochondriasm, and consulted a physician, who, after inquiring about

his malady, told his miserable patient, that he knew of no other medicine for him than to take frequent doses of Carlin—"I am Carlin himself," exclaimed the melancholy man in despair. BURTON, the pleasant and vivacious author of "The Anatomy of Melancholy," of whom it is noticed, that he could in an interval of vapours raise laughter in any company, in his chamber was "mute and mopish," and was at last so overcome by that intellectual disorder, which he appeared to have got rid of by writing his volume, that it is believed he closed his life in a fit of melancholy.

Could one have imagined that the brilliant wit, the luxuriant raillery, and the fine and deep sense of PASCAL could have combined with the most opposite qualities—the hypochondriasm and bigotry of an ascetic? ROCHEFOUCAULD, in private life, was a conspicuous example of all those moral qualities of which he seemed to deny the existence, and exhibited in this respect a striking contrast to the Cardinal

de Retz, who has presumed to censure him for his want of faith in the reality of virtue; but DE RETZ himself was the unbeliever in disinterested virtue. This great genius was one of those pretended patriots destitute of a single one of the virtues for which he was the clamorous advocate of faction.

When Valincour attributed the excessive tenderness in the tragedies of RACINE to the poet's own impassioned character, the son amply showed that his father was by no means this slave of love. RACINE never wrote a single love poem, nor even had a mistress; and his wife had never read his tragedies, for poetry was not her delight. Racine's motive for making love the constant source of action in his tragedies, was, from the principle which has influenced so many poets, who usually conform to the prevalent taste of the times. In the court of a young monarch, it was necessary that heroes should be lovers; Corneille had nobly run in one career, and Racine could not have existed as a great poet, had he not rivalled him

in an opposite one. The tender RACINE was no lover; but he was a subtle and epigrammatic observer, before whom his convivial friends never cared to open their minds; and the caustic BOILEAU truly said of him, "RACINE is far more malicious than I am."

ALFIERI speaks of his mistress, as if he lived with her in the most unreserved familiarity. The reverse was the case; and the gratitude and affection with which he describes his mother, and which she deserved, entered so little into his habitual feelings, that after their early separation, he never saw her but once, though he often passed through the country where she resided.

JOHNSON has composed a beautiful Rambler, describing the pleasures which result from the influence of good humour; and somewhat remarkably says, "Without good humour, learning and bravery can be only formidable, and confer that superiority which swells the heart of the lion in the desert, where he roars without reply and ravages without resistance." He

who could so finely discover the happy influence of this pleasing quality was himself a stranger to it, and "the roar and the ravage" were familiar to our lion. Men of genius frequently substitute their beautiful imagination for spontaneous and natural sentiment. It is not therefore surprising if we are often erroneous in the conception we form of the personal character of a distant author. KLOPSTOCK, the votary of the muse of Zion, so astonished and warmed the sage BODMER, that he invited the inspired bard to his house; but his visitor shocked the grave professor, when, instead of a poet rapt in silent meditation, a volatile youth leapt out of the chaise, who was an enthusiast for retirement only when writing verses. An artist whose pictures exhibit a series of scenes of domestic tenderness, awakening all the charities of private life, I have heard participated in them in no other way than on his canvass. EVELYN, who has written in favour of active life, loved, and lived in, retirement;"*

* Since this was written, the correspondence of EVELYN has appeared, by which we find that he apologised

while Sir GEORGE MACKENZIE, who had been continually in the bustle of business, framed an eulogium on solitude. We see in MACHIAVEL's code of tyranny, of depravity, and of criminal violence, a horrid picture of human nature; but this retired philosopher was a friend to the freedom of his country, he participated in none of the crimes he had recorded, but drew up these systematised crimes "as an observer, not as a criminal." DRUMMOND, whose sonnets still retain the beauty and the sweetness and the delicacy of the most amiable imagination, was a man of a harsh irritable temper, and has been thus characterised;

to Cowley for having published this very treatise, which seemed to condemn that life of study and privacy to which they were both equally attached; and confesses that the whole must be considered as a mere sportive effusion, requesting that Cowley would not suppose its principles to form his private opinions. Thus LEIBNITZ, we are told, laughed at the fanciful system revealed in his *Theodicée*, and acknowledged, that he never wrote it in earnest; that a philosopher is not always obliged to write seriously, and that to invent an hypothesis is only a proof of the force of imagination.

"Testie Drummond could not speak for fretting."

Thus authors and artists may yield no certain indication of their personal characters in their works. Inconstant men will write on constancy, and licentious minds may elevate themselves into poetry and piety. We should be unjust to some of the greatest geniuses, if the extraordinary sentiments which they put into the mouths of their dramatic personages are maliciously to be applied to themselves. EURIPIDES was accused of atheism when he introduced a denier of the gods on the stage. MILTON has been censured by CLARKE for the impiety of Satan; and an enemy of SHAKESPEARE might have reproached him for his perfect delineation of the accomplished villain Iago, as it was said that Dr. MOORE was hurt in the opinions of some by his odious Zeluco. CREBILLON complains of this.—"They charge me with all the iniquities of Atreus, and they consider me in some places as a wretch with whom it is unfit to associate; as if all which the mind in-

vents must be derived from the heart." This poet offers a striking instance of the little alliance existing between the literary and personal dispositions of an author. CREBILLON, who exulted on his entrance into the French academy that he had never tinged his pen with the gall of satire, delighted to strike on the most harrowing string of the tragic lyre. In his Atreus, the father drinks the blood of his son; in his Rhadamistus, the son expires under the hand of the father; in his Electra, the son assassinates the mother. A poet is a painter of the soul, but a great artist is not therefore a bad man.

Montaigne appears to have been sensible of this fact in the literary character. Of authors, he says, he likes to read their little anecdotes and private passions; "Car j'ai une singulière curiosité de connaitre l'âme et les naïfs jugemens de mes auteurs. Il faut bien juger leur suffisance, mais non pas leurs mœurs, ni eux, par cette montre de leurs écrits qu'ils étalent au théâtre du monde." Which may

be thus translated: "For I have a singular curiosity to know the soul and simple opinions of my authors. We must judge of their ability, but not of their manners, nor of themselves, by that show of their writings which they display on the theatre of the world." This is very just; are we yet sure, however, that the simplicity of this old favourite of Europe might not have been as much a theatrical gesture, as the sentimentality of Sterne? The great authors of the Port Royal Logic, have raised severe objections to prove that MONTAIGNE was not quite so open in respect to those simple details which he imagined might diminish his personal importance with his readers. He pretends that he reveals all his infirmities and weaknesses, while he is perpetually passing himself off for something more than he is. He carefully informs us that he has "a page," the usual attendant of an independent gentleman, and lives in an old family chateau; when the fact was, that his whole revenue did not exceed six thousand livres, a state beneath

mediocrity. He is also equally careful not to drop any mention of his having a *clerk with a bag;* for he was a counsellor of Bordeaux, but affected the gentleman and the soldier. He trumpets himself forth for having been *mayor* of Bordeaux, as this offered an opportunity of telling us that he succeeded *Marshal* Biron, and resigned it to *Marshal* Matignon. Could he have discovered that any *marshal* had been a *lawyer*, he would not have sunk that part of his life. Montaigne himself has said, "that in forming a judgment of a man's life, particular regard should be paid to his behaviour at the end of it;" and he more than once tells us that the chief study of his life is to die calm and silent; and that he will plunge himself headlong and stupidly into death, as into an obscure abyss, which swallows one up in an instant; that to die was the affair of a moment's suffering, and required no precepts. He talked of reposing on the "pillow of doubt." But how did this great philosopher die? He called for the more powerful opiates of the infallible

church! The mass was performed in his chamber, and in rising to embrace it his hands dropped and failed him: thus, as Professor Dugald Stewart observes on this philosopher, "He expired in performing what his old preceptor, Buchanan, would not have scrupled to describe as an act of idolatry."

We must not then consider that he who paints vice with energy is therefore vicious, lest we injure an honourable man; nor must we imagine that he who celebrates virtue is therefore virtuous, for we may then repose on a heart which knowing the right pursues the wrong.

These paradoxical appearances in the history of genius present a curious moral phenomenon. Much must be attributed to the plastic nature of the versatile faculty itself. Unquestionably many men of genius have often resisted the indulgence of one talent to exercise another with equal power; and some who have solely composed sermons, could have touched on the foibles of society with the spirit of Horace

or Juvenal. BLACKSTONE and Sir WILLIAM JONES directed that genius to the austere studies of law and philology, which might have excelled in the poetical and historical character. So versatile is this faculty of genius, that its possessors are sometimes uncertain of the manner in which they shall treat their subject, whether gravely or ludicrously. When BREBOEUF, the French translator of the Pharsalia of Lucan, had completed the first book as it now appears, he at the same time composed a burlesque version, and sent both to the great arbiter of taste in that day, to decide which the poet should continue. The decision proved to be difficult. Are there not writers who with all the vehemence of genius, by adopting one principle, can make all things shrink into the pigmy forms of ridicule, or by adopting another principle startle us by the gigantic monsters of their own exaggerated imagination? On this principle of the versatility of the faculty, a production of genius is a piece of art which wrought up to its full effect, with a feli-

city of manner obtained by taste and habit, is merely the result of certain arbitrary combinations of the mind.

Are we then to reduce the works of a man of genius to a mere sport of his talents—a game in which he is only the best player? Can he whose secret power raises so many emotions in our breasts, be without any in his own? A mere actor performing a part? Is he unfeeling when he is pathetic, indifferent when he is indignant? Is he an alien to all the wisdom and virtue he inspires? No! were men of genius themselves to assert this, and it is said some incline so to do, there is a more certain conviction, than their misconceptions, in our own consciousness, which for ever assures us, that deep feelings and elevated thoughts can alone spring from those who feel deeply and think nobly.

In proving that the character of the man may be very opposite to that of his writings, we must recollect that the habits of the life

may be contrary to the habits of the mind.* The influence of their studies over men of genius is limited. Out of the ideal world, man is reduced to be the active creature of sensation. An author has, in truth, two distinct characters: the literary, formed by the habits of his study; the personal, by the habits of his situation. GRAY, cold, effeminate, and timid in his personal, was lofty and awful in his literary character. We see men of polished manners and bland affections, who, in grasping a pen, are thrusting a poniard; while others in domestic life with the simplicity of children and the feebleness of nervous affections, can shake

* Nothing is more delightful to me in my researches on the literary character, than when I find in persons of unquestionable and high genius the results of my own discoveries. This has frequently happened to confirm my principles. Long after this was published, Madame De Staël made this important confession in her recent work, "Dix Années d'Exil," p. 154. "Je ne pouvois me dissimuler que je n'étois pas une personne courageuse; j'ai de la hardiesse dans l'imagination mais de la timidité dans le caractère."

the senate or the bar with the vehemence of their eloquence and the intrepidity of their spirit. The writings of the famous BAPTISTA PORTA are marked by the boldness of his genius, which formed a singular contrast with the pusillanimity of his conduct when menaced or attacked. The heart may be feeble though the mind is strong. To think boldly may be the habit of the mind, to act weakly may be the habit of the constitution.

However the personal character may contrast with that of their genius, still are the works themselves genuine, and exist as realities for us—and were so doubtless to the composers themselves, in the act of composition. In the calm of study, a beautiful imagination may convert him whose morals are corrupt, into an admirable moralist, awakening feelings which yet may be cold in the business of life: as we have shown that the phlegmatic can excite himself into wit, and the cheerful man delight in "Night Thoughts." SALLUST, the corrupt Sallust, might retain the most sublime con-

ceptions of the virtues which were to save the Republic; and STERNE, whose heart was not so susceptible in ordinary occurrences, while he was gradually creating incident after incident and touching successive emotions, in the stories of Le Fevre and Maria, might have thrilled—like some of his readers. Many have mourned over the wisdom or the virtue they contemplated, mortified at their own infirmity. Thus, though there may be no identity between the book and the man, still for us, an author is ever an abstract being, and, as one of the Fathers said, "a dead man may sin dead, leaving books that make others sin." An author's wisdom or his folly does not die with him. The volume, not the author, is our companion, and is for us a real personage, performing before us whatever it inspires; "He being dead, yet speaketh." Such is the vitality of a book!

CHAPTER XXI.

The man of letters.—Occupies an intermediate station between authors and readers.—His solitude described.—Often the father of genius.—Atticus, a man of letters of antiquity.—The perfect character of a modern man of letters exhibited in Peiresc.—Their utility to authors and artists.

AMONG the active members of the literary republic there is a class to whom may be appropriately assigned the title of MEN OF LETTERS.

The man of letters, whose habits and whose whole life so closely resemble those of an author, can only be distinguished by this simple circumstance, that the man of letters is not an author.

Yet he whose sole occupation through life is literature, he who is always acquiring and

never producing, appears as ridiculous as the architect who never raised an edifice, or the statuary who refrains from sculpture. His pursuits are reproached with terminating in an epicurean selfishness, and amidst his incessant avocations he himself is considered as a particular sort of idler.

This race of literary characters, as we now find them, could not have appeared till the press had poured forth its affluence. In the degree that the nations of Europe became literary, was that philosophical curiosity kindled, which induced some to devote their fortunes and their days, and to experience some of the purest of human enjoyments, in preserving and familiarising themselves with "the monuments of vanished minds," as books are called by D'Avenant with so much sublimity. Their expansive library presents an indestructible history of the genius of every people, through all their æras—and whatever men have thought and whatever men have done, were at length discovered in books.

Men of letters occupy an intermediate station between authors and readers. They are gifted with more curiosity of knowledge and more multiplied tastes, and by those precious collections which they are forming during their lives, are more completely furnished with the means than are possessed by the multitude who read, and the few who write.

The studies of an author are usually restricted to particular subjects. His tastes are tinctured by their colouring, his mind is always shaping itself by their form. An author's works form his solitary pride, and his secret power; while half his life wears away in the slow maturity of composition, and still the ambition of authorship torments its victim alike in disappointment or in possession.

But soothing is the solitude of the MAN OF LETTERS! View the busied inhabitant of the library surrounded by the objects of his love! He possesses them and they possess him! Those volumes—images of our mind and passions, as he traces them from Herodotus to

Gibbon, from Homer to Shakespeare—those portfolios, which gather up the inventions of genius, and that selected cabinet of medals, which holds so many unwritten histories;—some favourite sculptures and pictures, and some antiquities of all nations, here and there about his house—these are his furniture!

In his unceasing occupations the only repose he requires, consists, not in quitting but in changing them. Every day produces its discovery; every day in the life of a man of letters may furnish a multitude of emotions and of ideas. For him there is a silence amidst the world; and in the scene, ever opening before him, all that has passed is acted over again, and all that is to come seems revealed as in a vision. Often his library is contiguous to his chamber,*

* The contiguity of the CHAMBER to the LIBRARY is not the solitary fancy of an individual, but marks the class. Early in life, when in France and Holland, I met with several of these *amateurs*, who had bounded their lives by the circle of their collections, and were rarely seen out of them. The late Duke of ROXBURGH once expressed his delight to a literary friend of mine, that

and this domain "parva sed apta," this contracted space, has often marked the boundary of the existence of the opulent owner, who lives where he will die; contracting his days into hours: and a whole life thus passed is found too short to close its designs. Such are the men who have not been unhappily described by the Hollanders as *lief-hebbers*, lovers or fanciers, and their collections as *lief-hebbery*, things of their love. The Dutch call every thing for which they are impassioned *lief-hebbery;* but their feeling being much stronger than their

he had only to step from his sleeping apartment into his fine library; so that he could command at all moments the gratification of pursuing his researches while he indulged his reveries. The Chevalier VERHULST, of Bruxelles, of whom we have a curious portrait prefixed to the catalogue of his pictures and curiosities, was one of those men of letters who experienced this strong affection for his collections, and to such a degree, that he never went out of his house for twenty years; where, however, he kept up a courteous intercourse with the lovers of art and literature. He was an enthusiastic votary of Rubens, of whom he has written a copious life in Dutch, the only work he appears to have composed.

delicacy, they apply the term to every thing from poesy and picture to tulips and tobacco The term wants the melody of the languages of genius; but something parallel is required to correct that indiscriminate notion which most persons associate with that of *collectors*.

It was fancifully said of one of these lovers, in the style of the age, that "His book was his bride, and his study his bride-chamber." Many have voluntarily relinquished a public station and their rank in society, neglecting even their fortune and their health, for the life of self-oblivion of the man of letters. Count DE CAYLUS, with a princely income, expended the whole in study and the encouragement of art. He passed his mornings among the studios of artists, watching their progress, increasing his collections, and closing his day in the retirement of his own cabinet. His rank and his opulence were no obstructions to his settled habits. CICERO himself, in his happier moments, addressing ATTICUS, exclaimed—"I had much rather be sitting on your little bench under

Aristotle's picture, than in the curule chairs of our great ones." This wish was probably sincere, and reminds us of another great politician who in his secession from public affairs retreated to a literary life, where he appears suddenly to have discovered a new-found world. Fox's favourite line, which he often repeated, was,

> "How various his employments whom the world
> Calls idle!"

De Sacy, one of the Port-Royalists, was fond of repeating a lively remark of a man of wit, which seemed to him very beautiful, "That all the mischief in the world comes from not being able to keep ourselves quiet in our room." If this be true, men of letters are at least not mischievous.

But tranquillity is essential to the existence of the man of letters—an unbroken and devotional tranquillity. For though, unlike the author, his occupations are interrupted without inconvenience, and resumed without effort; yet if the painful realities of life break into this vi-

sionary world of literature and art, there is an atmosphere of taste about him which will be dissolved, and harmonious ideas which will be chased away as it happens when something is violently flung among the trees where the birds are singing; all instantly disperse.

Even to quit their collections for a short time is a real suffering to these lovers; every thing which surrounds them becomes so endeared by habit, and by some higher associations. Men of letters have died with grief from having been forcibly deprived of the use of their libraries. De Thou, with all a brother's sympathy, in his great history, has recorded the sad fates of several who had witnessed their collections dispersed in the civil wars of France, or had otherwise been deprived of their precious volumes. Sir Robert Cotton fell ill, and betrayed, in the ashy paleness of his countenance, the misery which killed him on the sequestration of his collections. "They have broken my heart who have locked up my library from me," was his lament.

If this passion for acquisition and enjoyment be so strong and exquisite, what wonder that these "lovers" should regard all things as valueless in comparison with the objects of their love? There seem to be spells in their collections, and in their fascination they have often submitted to the ruin of their personal, but not of their internal enjoyments. They have scorned to balance in the scales the treasures of literature and art, though imperial magnificence once was ambitious to outweigh them.

VAN PRAUN, a friend of Albert Durer's, of whom we possess a catalogue of pictures and prints, was one of these enthusiasts of taste. The Emperor of Germany, probably desirous of finding a royal road to a rare collection, sent an agent to procure the present one entire; and that some delicacy might be observed with such a man, the purchase was to be proposed in the form of a mutual exchange; the emperor had gold, pearls, and diamonds. Our *lief-hebber* having silently listened to the imperial agent, seemed astonished that such things should be

considered as equivalents for a collection of works of art, which had required a long life of experience and many previous studies and practised tastes to have formed, and compared with which gold, pearls, and diamonds, afforded but a mean, an unequal, and a barbarous barter.

If the man of letters be less dependent on others for the very perception of his own existence, than men of the world are, his solitude however is not that of a desert; for all there tends to keep alive those concentrated feelings which cannot be indulged with security, or even without ridicule in general society. Like the Lucullus of Plutarch, he would not only live among the votaries of literature, but would live for them; he throws open his library, his gallery, and his cabinet to all the Grecians. Such men are the fathers of genius; they seem to possess an aptitude in discovering those minds which are clouded over by the obscurity of their situations; and it is they who so frequently project those benevolent institutions, where they have poured out the philanthropy of their

hearts in that world which they appear to have forsaken. If Europe be literary, to whom does she owe this more than to these men of letters? Is it not to their noble passion of amassing through life those magnificent collections, which often bear the names of their founders from the gratitude of a following age? Venice, Florence, and Copenhagen, Oxford and London, attest the existence of their labours. Our BODLEYS and our HARLEYS, our COTTONS and our SLOANES, our CRACHERODES, our TOWNLEYS, and our BANKS were of this race! In the perpetuity of their own studies they felt as if they were extending human longevity, by throwing an unbroken light of knowledge into the next age. The private acquisitions of a solitary man of letters during half a century have become public endowments. A generous enthusiasm inspired these intrepid labours, and their voluntary privations of what the world calls its pleasures and its honours, would form an interesting history not yet written; their due, yet undischarged.

But "men of the world," as they are so emphatically distinguished, imagine that a man so lifeless in "the world" must be one of the dead in it, and, with mistaken wit, would inscribe over the sepulchre of his library, "Here lies the body of our friend." If the man of letters have voluntarily quitted their "world," at least he has past into another, where he enjoys a sense of existence through a long succession of ages, and where Time, who destroys all things for others, for him only preserves and discovers. This world is best described by one who has lingered among its inspirations. "We are wafted into other times and strange lands, connecting us by a sad but exalting relationship with the great events and great minds which have passed away. Our studies at once cherish and control the imagination, by leading it over an unbounded range of the noblest scenes in the overawing company of departed wisdom and genius."*

Living more with books than with men,

* Quarterly Review, No. XXXIII. p. 145.

which is often becoming better acquainted with man himself, though not always with men, the man of letters is more tolerant of opinions than opinionists are among themselves. Nor are his views of human affairs contracted to the day, like those who in the heat and hurry of a too active life, prefer expedients to principles; men who deem themselves politicians because they are not moralists; to whom the centuries behind have conveyed no results, and who cannot see how the present time is always full of the future. "Every thing," says the lively Burnet, "must be brought to the nature of tinder or gunpowder, ready for a spark to set it on fire," before they discover it. The man of letters indeed is accused of a cold indifference to the interests which divide society; he is rarely observed as the head or the "rump of a party;" he views at a distance their temporary passions—those mighty beginnings, of which he knows the miserable terminations.

Antiquity presents the character of a perfect

man of letters in ATTICUS, who retreated from a political to a literary life. Had his letters accompanied those of Cicero, they would have illustrated the ideal character of his class. But the sage ATTICUS rejected a popular celebrity for a passion not less powerful, yielding up his whole soul to study. CICERO, with all his devotion to literature, was at the same time agitated by another kind of glory, and the most perfect author in Rome imagined that he was enlarging his honours by the intrigues of the consulship. He has distinctly marked the character of the man of letters in the person of his friend ATTICUS, for which he has expressed his respect, although he could not content himself with its imitation. "I know," says this man of genius and ambition, "I know the greatness and ingenuousness of your soul, nor have I found any difference between us, but in a different choice of life; a certain sort of ambition has led me earnestly to seek after honours, while other motives, by no means

blamable, induced you to adopt an honourable leisure; *honestum otium.*"* These motives appear in the interesting memoirs of this man of letters; a contempt of political intrigues combined with a desire to escape from the splendid bustle of Rome to the learned leisure of Athens. He wished to dismiss a pompous train of slaves for the delight of assembling under his roof a literary society of readers and transcribers. And having collected under that roof the portraits or busts of the illustrious men of his country, inspired by their spirit and influenced by their virtues or their genius, he inscribed under them, in concise verses, the characters of their mind. Valuing wealth only for its use, a dignified economy enabled him to be profuse, and a moderate expenditure allowed him to be generous.

The result of this literary life was the strong affections of the Athenians. At the first opportunity the absence of the man of letters offered, they raised a statue to him, conferring

* Ad Atticum, Lib. i. Ep. 17.

on our POMPONIUS the fond surname of ATTICUS. To have received a name from the voice of the city they inhabited, has happened to more than one man of letters. PINELLI, born a Neapolitan, but residing at Venice, among other peculiar honours received from the senate, was there distinguished by the affectionate title of "the Venetian."

Yet such a character as ATTICUS could not escape censure from "men of the world." They want the heart and the imagination to conceive something better than themselves. The happy indifference, perhaps the contempt, of our ATTICUS for rival factions, they have stigmatized as a cold neutrality, a timid pusillanimous hypocrisy. Yet ATTICUS could not have been a mutual friend, had not both parties alike held the man of letters as a sacred being amidst their disguised ambition; and the urbanity of ATTICUS, while it balanced the fierceness of two heroes, Pompey and Cæsar, could even temper the rivalry of genius in the orators Hortensius and Cicero. A great man of our

own country widely differed from the accusers of Atticus. Sir MATTHEW HALE lived in distracted times, and took the character of our man of letters for his model, adopting two principles in the conduct of the Roman. He engaged himself with no party business, and afforded a constant relief to the unfortunate, of whatever party. He was thus preserved amidst the contests of the times.

If the personal interests of the man of letters be not deeply involved in society, his individual prosperity however is never contrary to public happiness. Other professions necessarily exist by the conflict and the calamities of the community; the politician becomes great by hatching an intrigue; the lawyer in counting his briefs; the physician his sick-list; the soldier is clamorous for war, the merchant riots on high prices. But the man of letters only calls for peace and books, to unite himself with his brothers scattered over Europe; and his usefulness can only be felt at those intervals, when, after a long interchange of destruction, men recover-

ing their senses, discover that "knowledge is power." BURKE, whose ample mind took in every conception of the literary character, has finely touched on the distinction between this order of contemplative men, and the other active classes of society. In addressing Mr. MALONE, whose real character was that of a man of letters who first showed us the neglected state of our literary history, BURKE observed, for I shall give his own words, always too beautiful to alter—"If you are not called to exert your great talents, and employ your great acquisitions in the transitory service of your country, which is done in active life; you will continue to do it that permanent service which it receives from the labours of those who know how to make the silence of closets more beneficial to the world than all the noise and bustle of courts, senates, and camps."

A moving picture of the literary life of a man of letters who was no author, would have been lost to us, had not PEIRESC found in GASSENDI a twin spirit. So intimate was that

biographer with the very thoughts, so closely united in the same pursuits, and so perpetual an observer of the remarkable man whom he has immortalized, that when employed on this elaborate resemblance of his friend, he was only painting himself with all the identifying strokes of self-love.*

It was in the vast library of PINELLI, the founder of the most magnificent one in Europe, that PEIRESC, then a youth, felt the remote hope of emulating the man of letters before his eyes. His life was not without preparation, nor without fortunate coincidences, but there was a grandeur of design in the execution, which originated in the genius of the man himself.

The curious genius of PEIRESC was marked by its precocity, as usually are strong passions in strong minds; this intense curiosity was the

* "I suppose," writes EVELYN, that most agreeable enthusiast of literature, to a travelling friend, "that you carry the life of that incomparable virtuoso always about you in your motions, not only because it is portable, but for that it is written by the pen of the great Gassendus."

germ of all those studies which seemed mature in his youth. He early resolved on a personal intercourse with the great literary characters of Europe; and his friend has thrown over these literary travels that charm of detail by which we accompany PEIRESC into the libraries of the learned; there with the historian opening new sources of history, or with the critic correcting manuscripts, and settling points of erudition; or by the opened cabinet of the antiquary, decyphering obscure inscriptions, and explaining medals. In the galleries of the curious in art, among their marbles, their pictures, and their prints, Peiresc has often revealed to the artist some secret in his own art. In the museum of the naturalist, or the garden of the botanist, there was no rarity of nature, on which he had not something to communicate. His mind toiled with that impatience of knowledge, that becomes a pain only when the mind is not on the advance. In England PEIRESC was the associate of Camden and Selden, and had more than one interview with that friend to literary men, our

calumniated James the First. One may judge by these who were the men whom Peiresc sought, and by whom he himself was ever after sought. Such, indeed, were immortal friendships! Immortal they may be justly called, from the objects in which they concerned themselves, and from the permanent results of the combined studies of such friends.

Another peculiar greatness in this literary character was Peiresc's enlarged devotion to literature out of its purest love for itself alone. He made his own universal curiosity the source of knowledge to other men. Considering the studious as forming but one great family wherever they were, for PEIRESC the national repositories of knowledge in Europe formed but one collection for the world. This man of letters had possessed himself of their contents, that he might have manuscripts collated, unedited pieces explored, extracts supplied, and even draughtsmen employed in remote parts of the world, to furnish views and plans, and to copy antiquities for the student, who in some distant

retirement often discovered that the literary treasures of the world were unfailingly opened to him by the secret devotion of this man of letters.

Carrying on the same grandeur in his views, his universal mind busied itself in every part of the habitable globe. He kept up a noble traffic with all travellers, supplying them with philosophical instruments and recent inventions, by which he facilitated their discoveries, and secured their reception even in barbarous realms. In return he claimed, at his own cost, for he was "born rather to give than to receive," says Gassendi, fresh importations of oriental literature, curious antiquities, or botanic rarities; and it was the curiosity of PEIRESC which first embellished his own garden, and thence the gardens of Europe, with a rich variety of exotic flowers and fruits. Whenever presented with a medal, a vase, or a manuscript, he never slept over the gift till he had discovered what the donor delighted in; and a book, a picture, or a plant, when money could not be offered, fed

their mutual passion, and sustained the general cause of science. The correspondence of PEIRESC branched out to the farthest bounds of Ethiopia, connected both Americas, and had touched the newly discovered extremities of the universe, when this intrepid mind closed in a premature death.

I have drawn this imperfect view of PEIRESC's character, that men of letters may be reminded of the capacities they possess. In the character of PEIRESC however there still remains another peculiar feature. His fortune was not great; and when he sometimes endured the reproach of those whose sordidness was startled at his prodigality of mind, and the great objects which were the result, PEIRESC replied, that "a small matter suffices for the natural wants of a literary man, whose true wealth consists in the monuments of arts, the treasures of his library, and the brotherly affections of the ingenious." PEIRESC was a French judge, but he supported his rank more by his own character than by luxury or parade. He would not wear silk,

and no tapestry hangings ornamented his apartments; but the walls were covered with the portraits of his literary friends; and in the unadorned simplicity of his study, his books, his papers, and his letters were scattered about him on the tables, the seats, and the floor. There, stealing from the world, he would sometimes admit to his spare supper his friend Gassendi, "content," says that amiable philosopher, "to have me for his guest."

PEIRESC, like PINELLI, never published any work. These men of letters derived their pleasure, and perhaps their pride, from those vast strata of knowledge which their curiosity had heaped together in their mighty collections. They either were not endowed with that faculty of genius which strikes out aggregate views, or were destitute of the talent of composition which embellishes minute ones. This deficiency in the minds of such men may be attributed to a thirst of learning, which the very means to allay can only inflame. From all sides they are gathering information; and that

knowledge seems never perfect to which every day brings new acquisitions. With these men, to compose is to hesitate; and to revise is to be mortified by fresh doubts and unsupplied omissions. PEIRESC was employed all his life on a history of Provence; but, observes Gassendi, "He could not mature the birth of his literary offspring, or lick it into any shape of elegant form; he was therefore content to take the midwife's part, by helping the happier labours of others."

Such are the cultivators of knowledge, who are rarely authors, but who are often, however, contributing to the works of others; and without whose secret labours the public would not have possessed many valued ones. The delightful instruction which these men are constantly offering to authors and to artists, flows from their silent but uninterrupted cultivation of literature and the arts.

When Robertson, after his successful History of Scotland, was long irresolute in his designs, and still unpractised in that curious research

which habitually occupies these men of letters, his admirers had nearly lost his popular productions, had not a fortunate introduction to Dr. BIRCH enabled him to open the clasped books, and to drink of the sealed fountains. ROBERTSON has confessed his inadequate knowledge, and his overflowing gratitude, in letters which I have elsewhere printed. A suggestion by a man of letters has opened the career of many an aspirant. A hint from WALSH conveyed a new conception of English poetry to one of its masters. The celebrated treatise of GROTIUS on "Peace and War" was projected by PEIRESC. It was said of MAGLIABECHI, who knew all books, and never wrote one, that by his diffusive communications he was in some respect concerned in all the great works of his times. Sir ROBERT COTTON greatly assisted CAMDEN and SPEED; and that hermit of literatute, BAKER of Cambridge, was ever supplying with his invaluable researches Burnet, Kennet, Hearne, and Middleton. The concealed aid which men of letters afford authors, may be

compared to those subterraneous streams, which, flowing into spacious lakes, are, though unobserved, enlarging the waters which attract the public eye.

Count DE CAYLUS celebrated for his collections, and for his generous patronage of artists, has given the last touches to this picture of the man of letters, with all the delicacy and warmth of a self-painter.

"His glory is confined to the mere power which he has of being one day useful to letters and to the arts; for his whole life is employed in collecting materials of which learned men and artists make no use till after the death of him who amassed them. It affords him a very sensible pleasure to labour in hopes of being useful to those who pursue the same course of studies, while there are so great a number who die without discharging the debt which they incur to society."

Such a man of letters appears to have been the late Lord WOODHOUSELEE. Mr. Mac-

kenzie, returning from his lordship's literary retirement, meeting Mr. Alison, finely said, that "he hoped he was going to Woodhouselee; for no man could go there without being happier, or return from it without being better."

Shall we then hesitate to assert, that this class of literary men forms an useful, as well as a select order in society? We see that their leisure is not idleness, that their studies are not unfruitful for the public, and that their opinions, purified from passions and prejudices, are always the soundest in the nation. They are counsellors whom statesmen may consult; fathers of genius to whom authors and artists may look for aid, and friends of all nations; for we ourselves have witnessed, how, during a war of thirty years, the MEN OF LETTERS in England were still united with their brothers in France. The abode of Sir JOSEPH BANKS was ever open to every literary and scientific foreigner; while a wish expressed, or a com-

munication written by this MAN OF LETTERS, was even respected by a political power which, acknowledging no other rights, paid a voluntary tribute to the claims of science and the privileges of literature.

CHAPTER XXII.

Literary old age still learning.—Influence of late studies in life.—Occupations in advanced age of the literary character.—Of literary men who have died at their studies.

THE old age of the literary character retains its enjoyments, and usually its powers—a happiness which accompanies no other. The old age of coquetry witnesses its own extinct beauty; that of the "used" idler is left without a sensation; that of the grasping Crœsus exists only to envy his heir; and that of the Machiavel who has no longer a voice in the cabinet, is but an unhappy spirit lingering to find its grave: but for the aged man of letters memory returns to her stores, and imagination is still on the wing amidst fresh discoveries and

new designs. The others fall like dry leaves, but he drops like ripe fruit, and is valued when no longer on the tree.

The constitutional melancholy of JOHNSON often tinged his views of human life. When he asserted that "no man adds much to his stock of knowledge, or improves much after forty," his theory was overturned by his own experience; for his most interesting works were the productions of a very late period of life, formed out of the fresh knowledge with which he had then furnished himself.

The intellectual faculties, the latest to decline, are often vigorous in the decrepitude of age. The curious mind is still striking out into new pursuits, and the mind of genius is still creating. ANCORA IMPARO!—"Even yet I am learning!" was the concise inscription on an ingenious device of an old man placed in a child's go-cart, with an hour-glass upon it, which, it is said, Michael Angelo applied to his own vast genius in his ninetieth year. Painters have improved even to extreme old age:

WEST's last works were his best, and Titian was greatest on the verge of his century. Poussin was delighted with the discovery of this circumstance in the lives of painters: "As I grow older, I feel the desire of surpassing myself." And it was in the last years of his life, that with the finest poetical invention, he painted the allegorical pictures of the Seasons. A man of letters in his sixtieth year once told me, "It is but of late years that I have learnt the right use of books and the art of reading."

Time, the great destroyer of other men's happiness, only enlarges the patrimony of literature to its possessor. A learned and highly intellectual friend once said to me, "If I have acquired more knowledge these last four years than I had hitherto, I shall add materially to my stores in the next four years; and so at every subsequent period of my life, should I acquire only in the same proportion, the general mass of my knowledge will greatly accumulate. If we are not deprived by nature or misfortune of the means to pursue this per-

petual augmentation of knowledge, I do not see but we may be still fully occupied and deeply interested even to the last day of our earthly term." Such is the delightful thought of Owen Feltham; "If I die to-morrow, my life will be somewhat the sweeter to-day for knowledge." The perfectibility of the human mind, the animating theory of the eloquent De Staël, consists in the mass of our ideas, to which every age will now add, by means unknown to preceding generations. Imagination was born at once perfect, and her arts find a term to their progress; but there is no boundary to knowledge nor the discovery of thought.

How beautiful in the old age of the literary character is the plan which a friend of mine is now happily pursuing. His mind, like a mirror whose quicksilver does not decay, reflects all objects to the last. Full of learned studies and versatile curiosity, he annually projects a summer-tour on the Continent to some remarkable spot. The local associations are an unfailing source of agreeable impressions to a mind so

well prepared, and he presents his friends with a "Voyage littéraire," as a new-year's gift. May we long count his years by his volumes! In such pursuits, where life is rather wearing out than rusting out, as Bishop Cumberland expressed it, scarcely shall we feel those continued menaces of death which shake the old age of men of no intellectual pursuits, who are dying so many years.

Active enjoyments in the decline of life, then, constitute the happiness of literary men. The study of the arts and literature spreads a sunshine over the winter of their days; and their own works may be as delightful to themselves, as roses plucked by the Norwegian amidst his snows. In the solitude and the night of human life, they discover that unregarded kindness of nature, which has given flowers that only open in the evening, and only bloom through the night-season. NECKER offers a beautiful instance of the influence of late studies in life; for he tells us, that "the era of threescore and ten is an agreeable age for writing;

your mind has not lost its vigour, and envy leaves you in peace."

The opening of one of LA MOTHE LE VAYER's Treatises is striking: "I should but ill return the favours God has granted me in the eightieth year of my age, should I allow myself to give way to that shameless want of occupation which all my life I have condemned;" and the old man proceeds with his "observations on the composition and reading of books." "If man be a bubble of air, it is then time that I should hasten my task; for my eightieth year admonishes me to get my baggage together ere I leave the world," wrote VARRO, in opening his curious treatise *de Re Rustica*, which the sage lived to finish, and which after nearly two thousand years the world possesses. "My works are many, and I am old; yet I still can fatigue and tire myself with writing more," says PETRARCH in his Epistle to Posterity. The literary character has been fully occupied in the eightieth and the ninetieth year of life. ISAAC WALTON still glowed while writing some

of the most interesting biographies in his eighty-fifth year, and in the ninetieth enriched the poetical world with the first publication of a romantic tale by Chalkhill, "the friend of Spenser." BODMER, beyond eighty, was occupied on Homer, and WIELAND on Cicero's Letters.*

But the delight of opening a new pursuit, or a new course of reading, imparts the vivacity and novelty of youth even to old age. The revolutions of modern chemistry kindled the curiosity of Dr. REID to his latest days, and he studied by various means, to prevent the decay of his faculties, and to remedy the deficiencies of one failing sense by the increased activity of another. A late popular author, when advanced in life, discovered, in a class of reading to which he had never been accustomed,—that numerous race of books on singular subjects with which French literature ancient and modern abounds—a profuse supply of fresh fur-

* See Curiosities of Literature on "The progress of old age in new studies."

niture for his mind to his last days. In looking over the late Mr. HAYLEY'S sale catalogue of his books, I was gratified to find, that this veteran man of letters was a purchaser of books published in the very year he died.

Even the steps of time are retraced, and we resume the possessions we seemed to have lost; for in advanced life a return to our early studies refreshes and renovates the spirits: we open the poets who made us enthusiasts, and the philosophers who taught us to think, with a new source of feeling acquired by our own experience. ADAM SMITH confessed his satisfaction at this pleasure to professor Dugald Stewart, while "he was reperusing, with the enthusiasm of a student, the tragic poets of ancient Greece, and Sophocles and Euripides lay open on his table."

> Dans ses veines toujours un jeune sang bouillone,
> Et Sophocle à cent ans peint encore Antigone.

The calm philosophic HUME found that death only could interrupt the keen pleasure he was

again receiving from Lucian, inspiring at the moment a humorous self-dialogue with Charon. "Happily," said this philosopher, "on retiring from the world, I found my taste for reading return even with greater avidity." We find GIBBON after the close of his history, returning with an appetite as keen to "a full repast on Homer and Aristophanes, and involving himself in the philosophic maze of the writings of Plato." Lord WOODHOUSELEE found the recomposition of his "Lectures on History" so fascinating in the last period of his life, that Mr. Alison informs us, "it rewarded him with that *peculiar delight*, which has been often observed in the later years of literary men; the delight of returning again to the studies of their youth, and of feeling under the snows of age the cheerful memories of their spring."

Not without a sense of exultation has the literary character felt this peculiar happiness, in the unbroken chain of his habits and his feelings. HOBBES exulted that he had outlived his enemies, and was still the same Hobbes; and to

demonstrate the reality of this existence, published, in the eighty-seventh year of his age, his version of the Odyssey, and the following year, his Iliad. Of the happy results of literary habits in advanced life, the Count DE TRESSAN, the elegant abridger of the old French romances, in his "literary advice to his children," has drawn a most pleasing picture. With a taste for study, which he found rather inconvenient in the moveable existence of a man of the world, and a military wanderer, he had, however, contrived to reserve an hour or two every day for literary pursuits. The men of science, with whom he had chiefly associated, appear to have turned his passion to observation and knowledge, rather than towards imagination and feeling; the combination formed a wreath for his gray hairs. When Count de Tressan retired from a brilliant to an affectionate circle, amidst his family, he pursued his literary tastes, with the vivacity of a young author inspired by the illusion of fame. At the age of seventy-five, with the imagination of a poet, he abridged, he trans-

lated, he recomposed his old Chivalric Romances, and his reanimated fancy struck fire in the veins of the old man. Among the first designs of his retirement was a singular philosophical legacy for his children. It was a view of the history and progress of the human mind—of its principles, its errors, and its advantages, as these were reflected in himself; in the dawnings of his taste, and the secret inclinations of his mind, which the men of genius of the age with whom he associated had developed. Expatiating on their memory, he calls on his children to witness the happiness of study, so evident in those pleasures which were soothing and adorning his old age. "Without knowledge, without literature," exclaims the venerable enthusiast, "in whatever rank we are born, we can only resemble the vulgar." To the centenary FONTENELLE the Count DE TRESSAN was chiefly indebted for the happy life he derived from the cultivation of literature; and when this man of a hundred years died, TRESSAN, himself on the borders of the grave, would offer the last fruits of his mind in

an *éloge* to his ancient master. It was the voice of the dying to the dead, a last moment of the love and sensibility of genius, which feeble life could not extinguish.

The genius of CICERO, inspired by the love of literature, has thrown something delightful over this latest season of life, in his *de Senectute*. To have written on old age, in old age, is to have obtained a triumph over time.*

When the literary character shall discover himself to be like a stranger in a new world, when all that he loved has not life, and all that lives has no love for old age: when his ear has ceased to listen, and nature has locked up the man within himself, he may still expire amidst his busied thoughts. Such aged votaries, like the old bees, have been found dying in their honey-combs. Let them preserve but the flame alive on the altar, and at the last moments they may be found in the act of sacrifice! The ve-

* Spurinna, or the Comforts of Old Age, by the late Sir Thomas Bernard, was written a year or two before he died.

nerable BEDE, the instructor of his generation and the historian for so many successive ones, expired in the act of dictating. Such was the fate of PETRARCH, who not long before his death, had written to a friend, "I read, I write, I think; such is my life, and my pleasures as they were in my youth." Petrarch was found lying on a folio in his library, from which volume he had been busied in making extracts for the biography of his countrymen. His domestics having often observed him studying in that reclining posture for days together, it was long before they discovered that the poet was no more. The fate of LEIBNITZ was similar: he was found dead with the Argenis of Barclay in his hand; he had been studying the style of that political romance as a model for his intended history of the House of Brunswick. The literary death of BARTHELEMY affords a remarkable proof of the force of uninterrupted habits of study. He had been slightly looking over the newspaper, when suddenly he called for a Horace, opened the volume, and found

the passage, on which he paused for a moment; and then, too feeble to speak, made a sign to bring him Dacier's; but his hands were already cold, the Horace fell—and the classical and dying man of letters sunk into a fainting fit, from which he never recovered. Such too was the fate, perhaps now told for the first time, of the great Lord CLARENDON. It was in the midst of composition that his pen suddenly dropped from his hand on the paper, he took it up again, and again it dropped; deprived of the sense of touch—his hand without motion—the earl perceived himself struck by palsy—and the life of the noble exile closed amidst the warmth of a literary work unfinished!

CHAPTER XXIII.

Universality of Genius.—Limited notion of genius entertained by the ancients.—Opposite faculties act with diminished force.—Men of genius excel only in a single art.

THE ancients addicted themselves to one species of composition; the tragic poet appears not to have entered into the province of comedy, nor, as far as we know, were their historians writers of verse. Their artists worked on the same principle; and from Pliny's account of the ancient sculptors, we may infer that with them the true glory of genius consisted in carrying to perfection a single species of their art. They did not exercise themselves indifferently on all subjects, but cultivated the favourite ones which they had chosen from the impulse of their own imagination. The hand which could

copy nature in a human form, with the characteristics of the age and the sex, and the occupations of life, refrained from attempting the colossal and ideal majesty of a divinity; and when one of these sculptors, whose skill was pre-eminent in casting animals, had exquisitely wrought the glowing coursers for a triumphal car, he requested the aid of Praxiteles to place the driver in the chariot, that his work might not be disgraced by a human form of inferior beauty to his animals. Alluding to the devotion of an ancient sculptor to his labours, Madame de Staël has finely said, "The history of his life was the history of his statue."

Such was the limited conception which the ancients formed of genius. They confined it to particular objects or departments in art. But there is a tendency among men of genius to ascribe an universality of power to a master-intellect. Dryden imagined that Virgil could have written satire equally with Juvenal, and some have hardily defined genius as "A power to accomplish all that we undertake." But

literary history will detect this fallacy, and the failures of so many eminent men are instructions from Nature which must not be lost on us.

No man of genius put forth more expansive promises of universal power than LEIBNITZ. Science, imagination, history, criticism, fertilised the richest of human soils; yet LEIBNITZ with immense powers and perpetual knowledge, dissipated them in the multiplicity of his pursuits. "The first of philosophers," the late Professor Playfair observed, "has left nothing in the immense tract of his intellect which can be distinguished as a monument of his genius." As an universalist, VOLTAIRE remains unparalleled in ancient or in modern times. This voluminous idol of our neighbours stands without a rival in literature; but an exception, even if this were one, cannot overturn a fundamental principle, for we draw our conclusions not from the fortune of one man of genius, but from the fate of many. The real claims of this great writer to invention and originality are as moderate as his size and his variety are as-

tonishing. The wonder of his ninety volumes is, that he singly consists of a number of men of the second order, making up one great man; for unquestionably some could rival Voltaire in any single province, but no one but himself has possessed them all. Voltaire discovered a new art, that of creating a supplement to the genius which had preceded him; and without Corneille, Racine, and Ariosto, it would be difficult to conjecture what sort of a poet Voltaire could have been. He was master too of a secret in composition, which consisted in a new style and manner. His style promotes, but never interrupts thinking, while it renders all subjects familiar to our comprehension: his manner consists in placing objects well known in new combinations; he ploughed up the fallow lands, and renovated the worn out exhausted soils. Swift defined a good style, as "proper words in proper places." Voltaire's impulse was of a higher flight, "proper thoughts on proper subjects." Swift's idea was that of a grammarian. Voltaire's feeling was

that of a philosopher. We are only considering this universal writer in his literary character, which has fewer claims to the character of an inventor, than several who never attained to his celebrity.

Are the original powers of genius then limited to a single art, and even to departments in that art? May not men of genius plume themselves with the vain glory of universality? Let us dare to call this a vain glory; for he who stands the first in his class, does not really add to the distinctive character of his genius, by a versatility which, however apparently successful, is always subordinate to the great character on which his fame rests. It is only that character which bears the raciness of the soil; it is only that impulse whose solitary force stamps the authentic work of genius. To execute equally well on a variety of subjects, may raise a suspicion of the nature of the executive power. Should it be mimetic, the ingenious writer may remain absolutely destitute of every claim to genius. Du Clos has been refused

the honours of genius by the French critics, because he wrote equally well on a variety of subjects.

I know that this principle is contested by some of great name, who have themselves evinced a wonderful variety of powers. This penurious principle flatters not that egotism which great writers share in common with the heroes who have aimed at universal empire. Besides this universality may answer many temporary purposes. These writers may however observe, that their contemporaries are continually disputing on the merits of their versatile productions, and the most contrary opinions are even formed by their admirers; but their great individual character standing by itself, and resembling no other, is a positive excellence. It is time only, who is influenced by no name, and will never, like contemporaries, mistake the true work of genius.

And if it be true that the primary qualities of the mind are so different in men of genius as to render them more apt for one class than for

another, it would seem, that whenever a pre-eminent faculty had shaped the mind, a faculty of the most contrary nature must act with a diminished force, and the other often with an exclusive one. An impassioned and pathetic genius has never become equally eminent as a comic genius. RICHARDSON and FIELDING could not have written each other's works. Could BUTLER, who excelled in wit and satire, like MILTON have excelled in sentiment and imagination? Some eminent men have shown remarkable failures in their attempts to cultivate opposite departments in their own pursuits. The tragedies and the comedies of DRYDEN equally prove that he was not blest with a dramatic genius. CIBBER, a spirited comic writer, was noted for the most degrading failures in tragedy; while ROWE, successful in the softer tones of the tragic muse, proved as luckless a candidate for the smiles of the comic, as the pathetic OTWAY. LA FONTAINE, unrivalled humorist as a fabulist, found his opera hissed, and his romance utterly tedious. The

true genius of STERNE was of a descriptive and pathetic cast, and his humour and ribaldry were a perpetual violation of his natural bent. ALFIERI's great tragic powers could not strike out into comedy or wit. SCARRON declared he intended to write a tragedy. The experiment was not made, but with his strong cast of mind and habitual associations, we probably have lost a new sort of "Roman comique." CICERO failed in poetry, ADDISON in oratory, VOLTAIRE in comedy, and JOHNSON in tragedy. The Anacreontic poet remains only Anacreontic in his epic. With the fine arts the same occurrence has happened. It has been observed in painting, that the school eminent for design was deficient in colouring; while those who with Titian's warmth could make the blood circulate in the flesh, could never rival the expression and anatomy of even the middling artists of the Roman school.

Even among those rare and gifted minds which have startled us by the versatility of their powers, whence do they derive the high charac-

ter of their genius? Their durable claims are substantiated by what is individual and particular to themselves, and not from that variety which includes so much which others can equal. Their variety will ever stand unconnected with our conception of their positive originality. When we think of YOUNG, it is only of his "Night Thoughts," not of his tragedies, nor his poems, nor even of his satires, which others have rivalled or excelled. Of AKENSIDE the solitary work of genius is his great poem; his numerous odes are not of a higher order than those of other ode-writers. Had POPE only composed odes and tragedies, the great philosophical poet, master of human life and of perfect verse, had not left an undying name. TENIERS, unrivalled in the walk of his genius, degraded history by the meanness of his conceptions. Such instances abound, and demonstrate an important truth in the history of genius, that we cannot, however we may incline, enlarge the natural extent of our genius, any more than we can "add a cubit to our stature."

We may force it into variations, but in multiplying mediocrity, or in doing what others can do, we add nothing to genius.

So true is it that men of genius appear only to excel in a single art, or even in a single department of art, that it is usual with men of taste to resort to a particular artist for a particular object. Would you ornament your house by interior decorations, to whom would you apply if you sought the perfection of art, but to *different artists*, of very distinct characters in their invention and their execution? For your Arabesques you would call in the artist whose delicacy of touch and playfulness of ideas, are not to be expected from the grandeur of the historical painter, or the sweetness of the *Paysagiste*. Is it not evident that men of genius *excel* only in one department of their art, and that whatever they do with the utmost original perfection, cannot be equally done by another man of genius? He whose undeviating genius guards itself in its own true sphere, has the greatest chance of encountering

no rival. He is a Dante, a Milton, a Michael Angelo, a Raphael: his hand will not labour on what the Italians call *pasticcios;* and he remains not unimitated, but inimitable.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Literature an avenue to glory.—An intellectual nobility not chimerical, but created by public opinion.—Literary honours of various nations.—Local associations with the memory of the man of genius.

LITERATURE is an avenue to glory, ever open for those ingenious men who are deprived of honours or of wealth. Like that illustrious Roman who owed nothing to his ancestors, *videtur ex se natus*, these seem self-born; and in the baptism of fame, they have given themselves their name. Bruyere has finely said of men of genius, "These men have neither ancestors nor posterity; they alone compose their whole race."

But AKENSIDE, we have seen, blushed when his lameness reminded him of the fall of one of

his father's cleavers; PRIOR, the son of a vintner, could not endure to be reminded that "the *cask* retains its flavour," though by his favourite Horace; like VOITURE, the descendant of a *marchand du vin*, whose heart sickened over that which exhilarates all other hearts, whenever his opinion of its quality was maliciously consulted. All these instances too evidently prove that genius is subject to the most vulgar infirmities.

But some have thought more courageously. The amiable ROLLIN was the son of a cutler, but the historian of nations never felt his dignity compromised by his birth. Even late in life, he ingeniously alluded to his first occupation, for we find an epigram of his in sending a knife for a new-year's gift, "informing his friend, that, should this present appear to come rather from Vulcan than from Minerva, it should not surprise, for," adds the epigrammatist, "it was from the cavern of the Cyclops I began to direct my footsteps towards Parnassus." The great political negotiator Cardinal

D'Ossat was elevated by his genius from an orphan state of indigence, and was alike destitute of ancestry, of titles, even of parents. On the day of his creation, when others of noble extraction assumed new titles from the seignorial names of their ancient houses, he was at a loss to fix on one. Having asked the pope, whether he should choose that of his bishopric, his holiness requested him to preserve his plain family name, which he had rendered famous by his own genius. The sons of a sword-maker, a potter, and a tax-gatherer were the greatest of the orators, the most majestic of the poets, and the most graceful of the satirists of antiquity; Demosthenes, Virgil, and Horace. The eloquent Massillon, the brilliant Flechier, Rousseau and Diderot; Johnson, Goldsmith, and Franklin, arose amidst the most humble avocations.

Vespasian raised a statue to the historian Josephus, though a Jew; and the Athenians one to Æsop, though a slave. Even among great military republics the road to public ho-

nour was open, not alone to heroes and patricians, but to that solitary genius which derives from itself all which it gives to the public, and nothing from its birth or the public situation it occupies.

It is the prerogative of genius to elevate obscure men to the higher class of society. If the influence of wealth in the present day have created a new aristocracy of its own, where they already begin to be jealous of their ranks, we may assert that genius creates a sort of intellectual nobility, which is now conferred by public feeling; as heretofore the surnames of "the African," and of "Coriolanus," won by valour, associated with the names of the conqueror of Africa, and the vanquisher of Corioli. Were men of genius as such, to have armorial bearings, they might consist, not of imaginary things, of griffins and chimeras, but of deeds performed and of public works in existence. When DONDI raised the great astronomical clock at the University of Padua which was long the admiration of Europe, it gave a name

and nobility to its maker and all his descendants. There still lives a Marquis Dondi dal' Horologio. Sir Hugh Middleton, in memory of his vast enterprise, changed his former arms to bear three piles, to perpetuate the interesting circumstance, that by these instruments he had strengthened the works he had invented, when his genius poured forth the waters through our metropolis, thereby distinguishing it from all others in the world. Should not Evelyn have inserted an oak-tree in his bearings? for his "Sylva" occasioned the plantation of "many millions of timber-trees," and the present navy of Great Britain has been constructed with the oaks which the genius of Evelyn planted. There was an eminent Italian musician, who had a piece of music inscribed on his tomb, and I have heard of a Dutch mathematician, who had a calculation for his epitaph.

There is still a coldness in our national character, though some auspicious symptoms indicate that we are beginning to catch sparks

of inspiration and enthusiasm for the works and the celebrity of genius. Abroad, at the funerals of painters, some of their finest pictures were carried in the procession; and our REYNOLDS wished to have one of his, "Contemplation in the figure of an Angel," carried at his funeral. That it was not deemed prudent to comply with this last wish of the great artist, from the fears entertained as to the manner a London populace might have received such a novelty, only shows that the true and profound feeling of art is still confined within a circle among us, of which, hereafter, the circumference perpetually enlarging, may embrace the whole people. National subjects not clouded in allegorical nonsense, which distorts and disgraces the great facts it records, will make even the most refined of arts popular and delightful to the vulgar eye and heart. If the public have borrowed the names of some lords to dignify a "Sandwich" and a "Spencer," we may be allowed to raise into titles of literary nobility those distinctions which the public

voice has attached to some authors; *Æschylus* Potter, *Athenian* Stuart, and *Anacreon* Moore. BUTLER, in his own day, was more generally known by the single and singular name of *Hudibras*, than by his own.

This intellectual nobility is not chimerical. It must be found indeed, in the years which are to come; yet the prelude of their fame distinguishes these men from the crowd. Whenever the rightful possessor appears, will not the eyes of all spectators be fixed on him? I allude to scenes which I have witnessed. Will not even literary honours superadd a nobility to nobility; and make a name instantly recognised which might otherwise be hidden under its rank, and remain unknown by its title? Our illustrious list of literary noblemen is far more glorious than the satirical "Catalogue of Noble Authors," drawn up by a polished and heartless cynic, who has pointed his brilliant shafts at all who were chivalrous in spirit, or related to the family of genius. One may presume on the existence of this intellectual nobility, from the extraordinary

circumstance that the great have actually felt a jealousy of the literary rank. But no rivalry can exist in the solitary honour conferred on an author. It is not an honour derived from birth nor creation, but from PUBLIC OPINION, and as inseparable from his name, as an essential quality is from its object; for the diamond will sparkle and the rose will be fragrant, otherwise it is no diamond or rose. The great may well condescend to be humble to genius, since genius pays its homage in becoming proud of that humility. Cardinal Richelieu was mortified at the celebrity of the unbending CORNEILLE; so were several noblemen at POPE's indifference to their rank; and MAGLIABECHI, the book-prodigy of his age, whom every literary stranger visited at Florence, assured Lord Raley that the Duke of Tuscany had become jealous of the attention he was receiving from foreigners, as they usually went to visit MAGLIABECHI before the grand duke.

A confession by MONTESQUIEU states, with

open candour, a fact in his life which confirms this jealousy of the great with the literary character. "On my entering into life I was spoken of as a man of talents, and people of condition gave me a favourable reception; but when the success of my Persian Letters proved perhaps that I was not unworthy of my reputation, and the public began to esteem me, *my reception with the great was discouraging, and I experienced innumerable mortifications.*" Montesquieu subjoins a reflection sufficiently humiliating for the mere nobleman: "The great, inwardly wounded with the glory of a celebrated name, seek to humble it. In general he only can patiently endure the fame of others, who deserves fame himself." This sort of jealousy unquestionably prevailed in the late Lord Orford, a wit, a man of the world, and a man of rank; but while he considered literature as a mere amusement, he was mortified at not obtaining literary celebrity; he felt his authorial, always beneath his personal character.

It fell to my lot to develope his real feelings respecting himself and the literary men of his age.*

Who was the dignified character, Lord Chesterfield or Samuel Johnson, when the great author, proud of his protracted and vast labour, rejected his lordship's tardy and trivial patronage? "I value myself," says Swift, "upon making the ministry desire to be acquainted with PARNELL, and not Parnell with the ministry." PIRON would not suffer the

* Calamities of Authors, vol. i. I printed, in 1812, extracts from Walpole's correspondence with Cole. Some have considered that there was a severity of delineation in my character of Horace Walpole; but I am more inclined to add to, than to diminish the peculiar characteristics. I was the *first*, in my impartial view of his literary character, to proclaim to the world what it has now fully sanctioned, that "His most pleasing, if not his great talent, lay in *letter-writing*; here he was without a rival. His correspondence abounded with literature, criticism, and wit of the most original and brilliant composition." This was published several years before the recent collection of his letters.

literary character to be lowered in his presence. Entering the apartment of a nobleman, who was conducting another peer to the stair's-head, the latter stopped to make way for Piron: "Pass on, my Lord," said the noble master; "pass, he is only a poet." PIRON replied, "Since our qualities are declared, I shall take my rank," and placed himself before the lord. Nor is this pride, the true source of elevated character, refused to the great artist as well as the great author. MICHAEL ANGELO, invited by Julius II. to the court of Rome, found that intrigue had indisposed his Holiness towards him, and more than once the great artist was suffered to linger in attendance in the ante-chamber. One day the indignant man of genius exclaimed, "Tell his holiness, if he want me, he must look for me elsewhere." He flew back to his beloved Florence, to proceed with that celebrated cartoon which afterwards became a favourite study with all artists. Thrice the pope wrote for his return, and at length menaced the little state of Tuscany with war,

if Michael Angelo prolonged his absence. He returned. The sublime artist knelt at the feet of the Father of the Church, turning aside his troubled countenance in silence. An intermeddling bishop offered himself as a mediator, apologising for our artist by observing, that "Of this proud humour are these painters made!" Julius turned to this pitiable mediator, and, as Vasari tells, used a switch on this occasion, observing, "You speak injuriously of him, while I am silent. It is you who are ignorant." Raising Michael Angelo, Julius II. embraced the man of genius.

"I can make lords of you every day, but I cannot create a Titian," said the Emperor Charles V. to his courtiers, who had become jealous of the hours and the half-hours which that monarch stole from them that he might converse with the man of genius at his work. There is an elevated intercourse between power and genius; and if they are deficient in reciprocal esteem, neither are great. The intellectual nobility seems to have been asserted

by De Harlay, a great French statesman; for when the academy was once not received with royal honours, he complained to the French monarch, observing, that when "a man of letters was presented to Francis I. for the first time, the king always advanced three steps from the throne to receive him." It is something more than an ingenious thought, when Fontenelle, in his *éloge* on LEIBNITZ, alluding to the death of Queen Anne, adds of her successor, that "The Elector of Hanover united under his dominion an electorate, the three kingdoms of Great Britain, and LEIBNITZ and NEWTON."

If ever the voice of individuals can recompense a life of literary labour, it is in speaking a foreign accent. This sounds like the distant plaudit of posterity. The distance of space between the literary character and the inquirer, in some respects represents the distance of time which separates the author from the next age. FONTENELLE was never more gratified than when a Swede, arriving at the gates of Paris,

inquired of the custom-house officers where Fontenelle resided, and expressed his indignation that not one of them had ever heard of his name. HOBBES expresses his proud delight that his portrait was sought after by foreigners, and that the Great Duke of Tuscany made the philosopher the object of his first inquiries. CAMDEN was not insensible to the visits of German noblemen, who were desirous of seeing the British Pliny; and POCOCK, while he received no aid from patronage at home for his Oriental studies, never relaxed in those unrequited labours, animated by the learned foreigners, who hastened to see and converse with this prodigy of eastern learning.

Yes! to the very presence of the man of genius will the world spontaneously pay their tribute of respect, of admiration, or of love. Many a pilgrimage has he lived to receive, and many a crowd has followed his footsteps! There are days in the life of genius which repay its sufferings. DEMOSTHENES confessed

he was pleased when even a fishwoman of Athens pointed him out. CORNEILLE had his particular seat in the theatre, and the audience would rise to salute him when he entered. At the presence of RAYNAL in the House of Commons, the speaker was requested to suspend the debate till that illustrious foreigner, who had written on the English parliament, was accommodated with a seat. SPINOSA, when he gained a humble livelihood by grinding optical glasses, at an obscure village in Holland, was visited by the first general in Europe, who for the sake of this philosophical conference, suspended the march of the army.

In all ages and in all countries has this feeling been created. It is neither a temporary ebullition, nor an individual honour. It comes out of the heart of man. It is the passion of great souls. In Spain, whatever was most beautiful in its kind was described by the name of the great Spanish bard; every thing excellent was called a Lope. Italy would furnish a volume of the public honours decreed to lite-

rary men; nor is that spirit extinct, though the national character has fallen by the chance of fortune. METASTASIO and TIRABOSCHI received what had been accorded to PETRARCH and to POGGIO. Germany, patriotic to its literary characters, is the land of the enthusiasm of genius. On the borders of the Linnet, in the public walk of Zurich, the monument of GESNER, erected by the votes of his fellow-citizens, attests their sensibility; and a solemn funeral honoured the remains of KLOPSTOCK, led by the senate of Hamburgh, with fifty thousand votaries, so penetrated by one universal sentiment, that this multitude preserved a mournful silence, and the interference of the police ceased to be necessary through the city at the solemn burial of the man of genius. Has even Holland proved insensible? The statue of ERASMUS, in Rotterdam, still animates her young students, and offers a noble example to her neighbours of the influence even of the sight of the statue of a man of genius. Travellers never fail to mention ERASMUS when

Basle occupies their recollections; so that as Bayle observes, "He has rendered the place of his death as celebrated as that of his birth." In France, since Francis I. created genius, and Louis XIV. protected it, the impulse has been communicated to the French people. There the statues of their illustrious men spread inspiration on the spots which living they would have haunted. In their theatres the great dramatists; in their Institute their illustrious authors; in their public edifices congenial men of genius.* This is worthy of the country which

* We cannot bury the fame of our English worthies; that exists before us, independent of ourselves; but we bury the influence of their inspiring presence in those immortal memorials of genius easy to be read by all men —their statues and their busts, consigning them to spots seldom visited, and often too obscure to be viewed. Count Algarotti has ingeniously said, "L'argent que nous employons en tabatières et en pompons servait aux anciens à célébrer la mémoire des grands hommes par des monumens dignes de passer à la postérité; et là où l'on brule des feux de joie pour une victoire remportée, ils élevèrent des arcs de triomphe de porphyre et de marbre." May we not, for our honour, and for the advantage of our artists, venture to predict better times for ourselves?

privileged the family of LA FONTAINE to be for ever exempt from taxes, and decreed that the productions of the mind were not seizable, when the creditors of CREBILLON would have attached the produce of his tragedies.

These distinctive honours accorded to genius, were in unison with their decree respecting the will of BAYLE. It was the subject of a law-suit between the heir of the will and the inheritor by blood. The latter contested that this great literary character, being a fugitive for religion, and dying in a proscribed country, was divested by law of the power to dispose of his property, and that our author, when resident in Holland, in a civil sense was dead. In the parliament of Toulouse the judge decided that learned men are free in all countries; that he who had sought in a foreign land an asylum from his love of letters, was no fugitive; that it was unworthy of France to treat as a stranger a son in whom she gloried, and he protested against the notion of a civil death to such a man as Bayle, whose name was living

throughout Europe. This judicial decision in France was in unison with that of the senate of Rotterdam, who declared of the emigrant BAYLE, that "Such a man should not be considered as a foreigner."

Even the most common objects are consecrated when associated with the memory of the man of genius. We still seek for his tomb on the spot where it has vanished. The enthusiasts of genius still wander on the hills of Pausilippo, and muse on VIRGIL to retrace his landscape. There is a grove at Magdalen College which retains the name of ADDISON'S walk, where still the student will linger; and there is a cave at Macao, which is still visited by the Portuguese from a national feeling, for CAMOENS there passed many days in composing his Lusiad. When PETRARCH was passing by his native town, he was received with the honours of his fame; but when the heads of the town conducted Petrarch to the house where the poet was born, and informed him that the proprietor had often wished to make alterations, but that

the towns-people had risen to insist that the house which was consecrated by the birth of Petrarch should be preserved unchanged; this was a triumph more affecting to Petrarch than his coronation at Rome.*

In the village of Certaldo is still shown the house of BOCCACCIO; and on a turret are seen the arms of the Medici, which they had sculptured there, with an inscription alluding to a small house and a name which filled the world; and in Ferrara, the small house which ARIOSTO built was purchased, to be preserved, by the municipality, and there they still show the poet's study; and under his bust a simple but affecting tribute to genius records, that "Ludovico Ariosto

* On this passage I find a remarkable manuscript note by Lord Byron.

"It would have pained me more that "the proprietor" should have "*often*" wished to make alterations, than it could give pleasure that the rest of Arezzo rose against his *right* (for *right* he had); the depreciation of the lowest of mankind is more painful than the applause of the highest is pleasing; the sting of a scorpion is more in torture than the possession of any thing could be in rapture."

in this apartment wrote." Two hundred and eighty years after the death of the divine poet, it was purchased and restored by the *podesta*, with the money of the *commune*, that "the public veneration may be maintained." "Foreigners," says Anthony Wood of MILTON, "have, out of pure devotion, gone to Bread-street to see the house and chamber where he was born;" and at Paris the house which VOLTAIRE inhabited, and at Ferney his study, are both preserved inviolate. In the study of MONTESQUIEU at La Brede, near Bourdeaux, the proprietor has preserved all the furniture, without altering any thing, that the apartment where this great man meditated on his immortal work should want for nothing to assist the reveries of the spectator; and on the side of the chimney is still seen a place which while writing he was accustomed to rub his feet against, as they rested on it. In a keep or dungeon of this feudal *chateau*, the local association suggested to the philosopher his chapter on "The Liberty of the Citizen." It is the second chapter of

the twelfth book, of which the close is remarkable.

Let us regret that the little villa of POPE, and the poetic Leasowes of SHENSTONE, have fallen the victims of property as much as if destroyed by the barbarous hand which cut down the consecrated tree of Shakespeare. The very apartment of a man of genius, the chair he studied in, the table he wrote on, are contemplated with curiosity; the spot is full of local impressions. And all this happens from an unsatisfied desire to see and hear him whom we never can see nor hear; yet in a moment of illusion, if we listen to a traditional conversation, if we can revive one of his feelings, if we can catch but a dim image, we reproduce this man of genius before us, on whose features we so often dwell. Even the rage of the military spirit has taught itself to respect the abode of genius; and Cæsar and Sylla, who never spared the blood of their own Rome, alike felt their spirit rebuked, and alike saved the literary city of Athens. Antiquity has preserved

a beautiful incident of this nature, in the noble reply of the artist PROTOGENES. When the city of Rhodes was taken by Demetrius, the man of genius was discovered in his garden, tranquilly finishing a picture. "How is it that you do not participate in the general alarm?" asked the conqueror. "Demetrius, you war against the Rhodians, but not against the fine arts," replied the man of genius. Demetrius had already shown this by his conduct, for he forbade firing that part of the city where the artist resided.

The house of the man of genius has been spared amidst contending empires, from the days of Pindar to those of Buffon; and a recent letter of Prince Schwartzenberg to the countess, for the purpose of preserving "the Historian of Nature's" château, is a memorial of this elevated feeling. The feeling was not strange to us, and our own MARLBOROUGH had performed the same glorious office in guarding, amidst surrounding destruction, the hallowed asylum of FENELON. In the grandeur of Mil-

ton's verse we perceive the feeling he associated with this literary honour.

> "The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
> The house of Pindarus when temple and tower
> Went to the ground ——."

And the meanest things, the very household stuff, associated with the memory of the man of genius, become the objects of our affections. At a festival in honour of THOMSON the poet, the chair in which he composed part of his Seasons was produced, and appears to have communicated some of the raptures to which he was liable who had sat in that chair. RABELAIS, among his drollest inventions, could not have imagined that his old cloak would have been preserved in the university of Montpelier for future doctors to wear on the day they took their degree; nor could SHAKESPEARE have supposed, with all his fancy, that the mulberry tree which he planted would have been multiplied into relics. But in such instances the feeling is right, with a wrong direction;

and while the populace are exhausting their emotions on an old tree, an old chair, and an old cloak, they are paying that involuntary tribute to genius which forms its pride, and will generate the race.

CHAPTER XXV.

Influence of Authors on Society and of Society on Authors.—National tastes a source of literary prejudices.—True Genius always the organ of its nation.—Master-writers preserve the distinct national character.—Genius the organ of the state of the age.—Causes of its suppression in a people.—Often invented, but neglected.—The natural gradations of Genius.—Men of Genius produce their usefulness in privacy.—The public mind is now the creation of the public writer.—Politicians affect to deny this principle.—Authors stand between the governors and the governed.—A view of the solitary Author in his study.—They create an epoch in history.—Influence of popular Authors.—The immortality of thought.—The Family of Genius illustrated by their genealogy.

Literary fame, which is the sole preserver of all other fame, participates little, and remotely, in the remuneration and the honours of professional characters. All other professions press

more immediately on the wants and attentions of men, than the occupations of LITERARY CHARACTERS, who from their habits are secluded; producing their usefulness often at a late period of life, and not always valued by their own generation.

It is not the commercial character of a nation which inspires veneration in mankind, nor will its military power engage the affections of its neighbours. So late as in 1700, the Italian Gemelli, told all Europe that he could find nothing among us but our *writings* to distinguish us from a people of barbarians. It was long considered that our genius partook of the density and variableness of our climate, and that we were incapacitated even by situation from the enjoyments of those beautiful arts which had not yet travelled to us,—as if Nature herself had designed to disjoin us from more polished nations and brighter skies.

At length we have triumphed! Our philosophers, our poets, and our historians, are printed at foreign presses. This is a perpetual victory,

and establishes the ascendancy of our genius, as much at least as the commerce and the prowess of England. This singular revolution in the history of the human mind, and by its reaction, this singular revolution in human affairs, was effected by a glorious succession of AUTHORS, who have enabled our nation to arbitrate among the nations of Europe, and to possess ourselves of their involuntary esteem by discoveries in science; by principles in philosophy; by truths in history; and even by the graces of fiction; and there is not a man of genius among foreigners who stands unconnected with our intellectual sovereignty. Even had our country displayed more limited resources than its awful powers have opened, and had the sphere of its dominion been closed by its island boundaries, if the same *national literary character* had predominated, we should have stood on the same eminence among our continental rivals. The small cities of Athens and of Florence will perpetually attest the influence of the literary character over other nations. The one received

the tribute of the mistress of the universe, when the Romans sent their youth to be educated at the Grecian city, while the other, at the revival of letters, beheld every polished European crowding to its little court.

In closing this imperfect work by attempting to ascertain the real influence of authors on society, it will be necessary to notice some curious facts in the history of genius.

The distinct literary tastes of different nations, and the repugnance they mutually betray for the master-writers of each other, is an important circumstance to the philosophical observer. These national tastes originate in modes of feeling, in customs, in idioms, and all the numerous associations prevalent among every people. The reciprocal influence of manners on taste, and of taste on manners, of government and religion on the literature of a people, and of their literature on the national character, with other congenial objects of inquiry, still require a more ample investigation. Whoever attempts to reduce this diversity, and these strong contrasts of na-

tional tastes to one common standard, by forcing such dissimilar objects into comparative parallels, or by trying them by conventional principles and arbitrary regulations, will often condemn what in truth his mind is inadequate to comprehend, and the experience of his associations to combine.

These attempts have been the fertile source in literature of what may be called national prejudices. The French nation insists that the northerns are defective in taste—the taste, they tell us, which is established at Paris, and which existed at Athens: the Gothic imagination of the north spurns at the timid copiers of the Latin classics, and interminable disputes prevail in their literature, as in their architecture. Philosophy discovers a fact of which taste seems little conscious; it is, that genius varies with the soil, and produces a nationality of taste. The feelings of mankind indeed have the same common source, but they must come to us through the medium and by the modifications of society. Love is an universal passion, but the poetry of love in differ-

ent nations is peculiar to each; for every great poet belongs to his country. Petrarch, Lope de Vega, Racine, Shakespeare, and Sadi, would each express this universal passion by the most specific differences; and the style that would be condemned as unnatural by one people, might be habitual with another. The *concetti* of the Italian, the figurative style of the Persian, the swelling grandeur of the Spaniard, the classical correctness of the French, are all modifications of genius, relatively true to each particular writer. On national tastes critics are but wrestlers: the Spaniard will still prefer his Lope de Vega to the French Racine or the English his Shakespeare, as the Italian his Tasso and his Petrarch. Hence all national writers are studied with enthusiasm by their own people, and their very peculiarities, offensive to others, with the natives constitute their excellencies. Nor does this perpetual contest about the great writers of other nations solely arise from an association of patriotic glory, but really because these great native writers have

most strongly excited the sympathies, and conformed to the habitual tastes of their own people.

Hence then we deduce that true genius is the organ of its nation. The creative faculty is itself created; for it is the nation which first imparts an impulse to the character of genius. Such is the real source of those distinct tastes which we perceive in all great national authors. Every literary work, to insure its success, must adapt itself to the sympathies and the understandings of the people it addresses. Hence those opposite characteristics which are usually ascribed to the master-writers themselves, originate with the country, and not with the writer. LOPE DE VEGA and CALDERON in their dramas, and CERVANTES, who has left his name as the epithet of a peculiar grave humour, were Spaniards before they were men of genius. CORNEILLE, RACINE, and RABELAIS are entirely of an opposite character to the Spaniards, having adapted their genius to their own declamatory and vivacious countrymen. PETRARCH and TASSO display a fancifulness in de-

picting the passions, as BOCCACCIO narrates his facetious stories, quite distinct from the inventions and style of northern writers. SHAKESPEARE is placed at a wider interval from all of them than they are from each other, and is as perfectly insular in his genius, as his own countrymen were in their customs, and their modes of thinking and feeling.

Thus the master-writers of every people preserve the distinct national character in their works; and hence that extraordinary enthusiasm with which every people read their own favourite authors; but in which others cannot participate, and for which, with all their national prejudices, they often recriminate on each other with false, and even ludicrous criticism.

But genius is not only the organ of its nation; it is also that of the state of the times, and a great work usually originates in the age. Certain events must precede the man of genius, who often becomes only the vehicle of public feeling. MACHIAVEL has been reproached for propagating a political system subversive of all

human honour and happiness; but was it Machiavel who formed his age, or the age which created Machiavel? Living among the petty principalities of Italy, where stratagem and assassination were the practices of those wretched courts, what did that calumniated genius more than lift the veil from a cabinet of banditti? MACHIAVEL alarmed the world by exposing a system subversive of all human virtue and happiness, and whether he meant it or not, certainly led the way to political freedom. On the same principle we may learn that BOCCACCIO would not have written so many indecent tales, had not the scandalous lives of the monks engaged public attention. This we may now regret; but the court of Rome felt the concealed satire, and that luxurious and numerous class in society never recovered from the chastisement.

MONTAIGNE has been censured for his universal scepticism, and for the unsettled notions he threw out on his motley page, which has been attributed to his incapacity of form-

ing decisive opinions. "Que sçais-je?" was his motto. The same accusation may reach the gentle ERASMUS, who alike offended the old catholics and the new reformers. The real source of their vacillations we may discover in the age itself. It was one of controversy and of civil wars, when the minds of men were thrown into perpetual agitation, and opinions, like the victories of the parties, were every day changing sides.

Even in its advancement beyond the intelligence of its own age, genius is but progressive. In nature all is continuous; she makes no starts and leaps. Genius is said to soar, but we should rather say that genius climbs. Did the great VERULAM, or RAWLEIGH, or Dr. MORE emancipate themselves from all the dreams of their age, from the occult agency of witchcraft, the astral influence, and the ghost and demon creed?

Before a particular man of genius can appear, certain events must arise to prepare the age for him. A great commercial nation, in

the maturity of time, opened all the sources of wealth to the contemplation of ADAM SMITH. That extensive system of what is called political economy, could not have been produced at any other time; for before this period the materials of this work had but an imperfect existence, and the advances which this sort of science had made were only partial and preparatory. If the principle of Adam Smith's great work seems to confound the happiness of a nation with its wealth, we can scarcely reproach the man of genius, who we shall find is always reflecting back the feelings of his own nation, even in his most original speculations.

In works of pure imagination we trace the same march of the human intellect; and we discover in those inventions, which appear sealed by their originality, how much has been derived from the age and the people in which they were produced. Every work of genius is tinctured by the feelings, and often originates in the events of the times. The

Inferno of DANTE was caught from the popular superstitions of the age, and had been preceded by the gross visions which the monks had forged, usually for their own purposes. "La Città dolente," and "la perduta gente," were familiar to the imaginations of the people, by the monkish visions, and it seems even by ocular illusions of Hell, exhibited in mysteries, with its gulfs of flame, and its mountains of ice, and the shrieks of the condemned. To produce the "Inferno" only required the giant step of genius, in the sombre, the awful, and the fierce DANTE. When the age of chivalry flourished, all breathed of love and courtesy; the great man was the great lover, and the great author the romancer. It was from his own age that MILTON derived his greatest blemish,—the introduction of school-divinity into poetry. In a polemical age the poet, as well as the sovereign, reflected the reigning taste. SHAKESPEARE lived when the English Chronicles were first published: they became the delightful and perpetual reading of the

people; they lay open in their halls, and were chained in their parish churches; the subjects entered into their conversations, the inflammable train of imagination was laid, the igniting spark had only to fall—and SHAKESPEARE rose! Thus genius becomes the organ of its age.

There are accidents to which genius is liable, and by which it is frequently suppressed in a people. The establishment of the Inquisition in Spain at one stroke annihilated all the genius of the country. Cervantes said that the Inquisition had spoilt many of his most delightful inventions; and unquestionably it silenced the wit and invention of a nation whose proverbs attest they possessed them even to luxuriance. All the continental nations have boasted great native painters and architects, while these arts were long truly foreign to us. Theoretical critics, at a loss to account for this singularity, accused not only our climate, but even our diet as the occult causes of our unfitness to cultivate them. Yet

Montesquieu and Winkelman might have observed, that the air of fens and marshes had not deprived the gross feeders of Holland and Flanders of admirable artists. We have been outrageously calumniated. So far from any national incapacity, or obtuse feelings attaching to ourselves in respect to these arts, the noblest efforts had long been made, not only by individuals, but by the magnificence of Henry VIII., who invited to his court Raphael and Titian, but unfortunately only obtained Holbein. But a later king, Charles the first, not only possessed galleries of pictures, and was the greatest purchaser in Europe, for he raised their value, but likewise possessed the taste and the science of the connoisseur. Something indeed had occurred to our national genius which had thrown it into a stupifying state, from which it is yet scarcely aroused. Could those foreign philosophers have ascended to moral causes, instead of vapouring forth fanciful notions, they might have struck at the true cause of the deficiency in

our national genius. The jealousy of puritanic fanaticism had persecuted these arts from the first rise of the Reformation in this country. It had not only banished them from our churches and altar-pieces, but the fury of the people, and "the wisdom" of parliament had alike combined to mutilate and even efface what little remained of painting and sculpture among us. Even within our own times this deadly hostility to art was not extinct; for when a proposal was made gratuitously to decorate our places of worship by a series of religious pictures, and English artists, in pure devotion to Art zealous to refute the continental calumniators, asked only for walls to cover, our late sovereign highly approved of the plan. It was however suppressed by a bishop, from an obsolete notion that the cultivation of the fine arts in our naked churches was a return to catholicism. Had this glorious plan been realised, the golden age of English art might have arisen. Every artist would have invented a subject most congenial to his

powers. REYNOLDS would have emulated Raphael in the Virgin and Child in the manger, WEST had fixed on Christ raising the young man from the dead, BARRY had profoundly meditated on the Jews rejecting Jesus. Thus did an age of genius perish before its birth! BARRY, in the rage of disappointment, immortalised himself by a gratuitous labour of seven years on the walls of the Society of Arts, for which, it is said, the French government under Buonaparte offered ten thousand pounds.

Thus also it has happened, that we have possessed among ourselves great architects, although opportunities for displaying their genius have been rare. This the fate and fortune of two Englishmen attest. Without the fire of London, we might not have shown the world one of the greatest architects, in Sir CHRISTOPHER WREN; had not a St. Paul's been required by the nation, he would have found no opportunity of displaying the magnificence of his genius, which even then was mutilated, as the original model bears witness to the world.

That great occasion served this noble architect to multiply his powers in other public edifices: and it is here worth remarking, that had not Charles II. been seized by apoplexy, the royal residence which was begun at Winchester on a plan of Sir Christopher Wren's, by its magnificence would have raised a Versailles for England.

The fate of INIGO JONES is as remarkable as that of WREN. Whitehall afforded a proof to foreigners, that among a people which, before that edifice appeared, was reproached for their total deficiency of feeling for the pure classical style of architecture, the true taste could nevertheless exist. This celebrated piece of architecture however is but a fragment of a grander composition, by which, had not the civil wars intervened, the fame of Britain would have balanced the glory of Greece, or Italy, or France, and would have shown that our country is more deficient in marble than in genius. Thus the fire of London produces a St. Paul's, and the civil wars suppress a Whitehall. Such circum-

stances in the history of art among nations have not always been developed by those theorists who have calumniated our artists, and known little of England.

In the history of genius it is remarkable, that its work is often invented, and lies neglected. A close observer of this age pointed out to me, that the military genius of that great French captain who so long appeared to have conquered Europe, was derived from his applying the new principles of war discovered by FOLARD and GUIBERT. The genius of FOLARD observed, that among the changes of military discipline in the practice of war among European nations since the introduction of gunpowder, one of the ancient methods of the Romans had been improperly neglected, and in his Commentaries on Polybius, Folard revived this forgotten mode of warfare. GUIBERT, in his great work, "Histoire de la Milice Française," or rather the History of the Art of War, adopted Folard's system of charging by columns, and breaking the centre of the enemy, which seems

to be the famous plan of our Rodney and Nelson in their maritime battles. But this favourite plan became the ridicule of the military; and the boldness of his pen, with the high confidence of the author, only excited adversaries to mortify his pretensions, and to treat him as a dreamer. From this perpetual opposition to his plans, and the neglect he incurred, GUIBERT died of "vexation of spirit;" and the last words on the death-bed of this man of genius were, "One day they will know me!" FOLARD and GUIBERT created a BUONAPARTE, who studied them on the field of battle; and he who would trace the military genius who so long held in suspense the fate of the world, may discover all that he performed in the neglected inventions of preceding genius.

Hence also we may deduce the natural gradations of genius. Many men of genius must arise before a particular man of genius can appear. Before HOMER there were other epic poets; a catalogue of their names and their works has come down to us. CORNEILLE could

not have been the chief dramatist of France, had not the founders of the French drama preceded him, and POPE could not have preceded DRYDEN. It was in the nature of things that a GIOTTO and a CIMABUE should have preceded a RAPHAEL and a MICHAEL ANGELO.

Even the writings of such extravagant geniuses as BRUNO and CARDAN, gave indications of the progress of the human mind; and had RAMUS not shaken the authority of the *Organon* of Aristotle, we might not have had the *Novum Organon* of BACON. Men slide into their degree in the scale of genius, often by the exercise of a single quality which their predecessors did not possess, or by completing what at first was left imperfect. Truth is a single point in knowledge, as beauty is in art; ages revolve till a NEWTON and a LOCKE accomplish what an ARISTOTLE and a DESCARTES began. The old theory of animal spirits, observes Professor Dugald Stewart, was applied by DESCARTES to explain the mental phenomena, which led NEWTON into that train of thinking which

served as the groundwork of HARTLEY's theory of vibrations. The learning of one man makes others learned, and the influence of genius is in nothing more remarkable than in its effects on its brothers. SELDEN's treatise on the Syrian and Arabian Deities enabled MILTON to comprise in one hundred and thirty beautiful lines, the two large and learned syntagma which Selden had composed on that abstract subject. LELAND, the father of British antiquities, impelled STOWE to work on his "Survey of London;" and Stowe's "London" inspired CAMDEN's stupendous "Britannia." Herodotus produced Thucydides, and Thucydides Xenophon. With us HUME, ROBERTSON, and GIBBON rose almost simultaneously by mutual inspiration. There exists a perpetual action and reaction in the history of the human mind. It has frequently been inquired why certain periods seem to have been more favourable to a particular class of genius than another; or in other words, why men of genius appear in clusters. We have theories respecting barren periods, which are

only satisfactorily accounted for by moral causes. Genius generates enthusiasm and rivalry; but having reached the meridian of its class, we find that there can be no progress in the limited perfection of human nature. All excellence in art, if it cannot advance, must decline.

Important discoveries are often obtained by accident; but the single work of a man of genius, which has at length changed the character of a people, and even of an age, is slowly matured in meditation. Even the mechanical inventions of genius must first become perfect in its own solitary abode ere the world can possess them. Men of genius then produce their usefulness in privacy; but it may not be of immediate application, and is often undervalued by their own generation.

The influence of authors is so great, while the author himself is so inconsiderable, that to some the cause may not appear commensurate to its effect. When EPICURUS published his doctrines, men immediately began to express

themselves with freedom on the established religion, and the dark and fearful superstitions of paganism falling into neglect, mouldered away. If, then, before the art of multiplying the productions of the human mind existed, the doctrines of a philosopher, in manuscript or by lecture, could diffuse themselves throughout a literary nation, it will baffle the algebraist of metaphysics to calculate the unknown quantities of the propagation of human thought. There are problems in metaphysics, as well as in mathematics, which can never be resolved.

A small portion of mankind appears marked out by nature and by study for the purpose of cultivating their thoughts in peace, and of giving activity to their discoveries, by disclosing them to the people. "Could I," exclaims MONTESQUIEU, whose heart was beating with the feelings of a great author, "could I but afford new reasons to men to love their duties, their king, their country, their laws, that they might become more sensible of their happiness under every government they live, and in every

station they occupy, I should deem myself the happiest of men!" Such was the pure aspiration of the great author who studied to preserve, by ameliorating the humane fabric of society. The same largeness of mind characterizes all the eloquent friends of the human race. In an age of religious intolerance it inspired the President DE THOU to inculcate, from sad experience and a juster view of human nature, the impolicy as well as the inhumanity of religious persecutions, in that dedication to Henry IV. which Lord Mansfield declared he could never read without rapture. "I was not born for myself alone, but for my country and my friends!" exclaimed the genius which hallowed the virtuous pages of his immortal history.

Even our liberal yet dispassionate LOCKE restrained the freedom of his inquiries, and corrected the errors which the highest intellect may fall into, by marking out that impassable boundary which must probably for ever limit all human intelligence; for the maxim which LOCKE constantly inculcates is, that "Reason

must be the last judge and guide in every thing." A final answer to those who propagate their opinions, whatever they may be, with a sectarian spirit; crusaders, who have no tenderness in violating the feelings, and no reason while they force the understandings of other men to their own modes of belief, and their own variable opinions. This alike includes those who yield up nothing to the genius of their age to correct the imperfections of society, and those who, opposing all human experience, would annihilate what is most admirable in its institutions.

The public mind is the creation of the Master-Writers; an axiom as demonstrable as any in Euclid, and a principle as sure in its operation as any in mechanics. BACON's influence over philosophy and GROTIUS's over the political state of society are still felt, and their principles practised far more than in their own age. These men of genius in their solitude, and with their views not always comprehended by their contemporaries, became themselves the founders

of our Science and our legislation. When LOCKE and MONTESQUIEU appeared, the old systems of government were reviewed, the principle of toleration was developed, the revolutions of opinion were discovered.

A noble thought of VITRUVIUS, who of all the authors of antiquity seems to have been most deeply imbued with the feelings of the literary character, has often struck me by the grandeur and the truth of its conception. "The sentiments of excellent writers," he says, "although their persons be for ever absent, exist in future ages; and in councils and debates are of greater authority than those of the persons who are present."

But politicians affect to disbelieve that abstract principles possess any considerable influence on the conduct of the subject. They tell us, that "in times of tranquillity they are not wanted, and in times of confusion they are never heard:" this is the philosophy of men who do not choose that philosophy should disturb their fire-side! But it is in leisure, when

they are not wanted, that the speculative part of mankind create them, and when they are wanted, they are already prepared for the active multitude, who come like a phalanx, pressing each other with an unity of feeling, and an integrity of force. PALEY would not close his eyes on what was passing before him; for he has observed, that during the convulsions at Geneva, the political theory of ROUSSEAU was prevalent in their contests; while in the political disputes of our country, the ideas of civil authority displayed in the works of LOCKE, recurred in every form. The character of a great author can never be considered as subordinate in society; nor do politicians secretly think so at the moment they are proclaiming it to the world, for on the contrary, they consider the worst actions of men as of far less consequence than the propagation of their opinions. Politicians have exposed their disguised terrors. Books, as well as their authors, have been tried and condemned. Cromwell was alarmed when he saw the Oceana of HARRINGTON, and dread-

ed the effects of that volume more than the plots of the royalists; while Charles II. trembled at an author only in his manuscript state, and in the height of terror, and to the honour of genius it was decreed, that "Scribere est agere."—"The book of Telemachus," says Madame de Staël, "was a courageous action." To insist with such ardour on the duties of a sovereign, and to paint with such truth a voluptuous reign—disgraced FENELON at the court of Louis XIV., but the virtuous author raised a statue for himself in all hearts. MASSILLON's *Petit Carême* was another of these animated recalls of man to the sympathies of his nature, which proves the influence of an author; for during the contests of Louis XV. with the parliaments, large editions of this book were repeatedly printed, and circulated through the kingdom. In such moments it is that a people find and know the value of a great author, whose work is the mighty instrument which conveys their voice to their governors.

But if the influence of benevolent authors

over society is great, it must not be forgotten that the abuse of this influence is terrific. Authors preside at a tribunal in Europe, which is independent of all the powers of the earth, —the tribunal of Opinion! But since, as Sophocles has long declared, "Opinion is stronger than Truth," it is unquestionable, that the falsest and the most depraved notions are, as long as these opinions maintain their force, accepted as immutable truths; and the mistakes of one man become the crimes of a whole people.

Authors stand between the governors and the governed, and form the single organ of both. Those who govern a nation cannot at the same time enlighten the people, for the executive power is not empirical; and the governed cannot think, for they have no continuity of leisure. The great systems of thought, and the great discoveries in moral and political philosophy, have come from the solitude of contemplative men, seldom occupied in public affairs or in private employments. The commercial world

owes to two retired philosophers, LOCKE and SMITH, those principles which dignify trade into a liberal pursuit, and connect it with the happiness and the glory of a people. A work in France, under the title of "L'Ami des Hommes," by the Marquis of MIRABEAU, first spread there a general passion for agricultural pursuits; and although the national ardour carried all to excess in the reveries of the "Economistes," yet marshes were drained and waste lands inclosed. The Emilius of ROUSSEAU, whatever may be its errors and extravagancies, operated a complete revolution in modern Europe, by communicating a bolder spirit to education, and improving the physical force and character of man. An Italian marquis, whose birth and habits seemed little favourable to study, operated a moral revolution in the administration of the laws. BECCARIA dared to plead in favour of humanity against the prejudices of many centuries, in his small volume on "Crimes and Punishments," and at length abolished torture; while the French advocates

drew their principles from that book, rather than from their national code, and our Blackstone quoted it with admiration! LOCKE and VOLTAIRE having written on "Toleration," have long made us tolerant. In all these cases, and a great number which might be furnished, the authors were themselves entirely unconnected with their subjects, except as speculative writers.

Such are the authors who become universal in public opinion; and it then happens that the work itself meets with the singular fate, which that great genius SMEATON said happened to his stupendous Pharos; "the novelty having yearly worn off, and the greatest real praise of the edifice being that nothing has happened to it, nothing has occurred to keep the talk of it alive." The fundamental principles of such works, after having long entered into our earliest instruction, become obvious as truisms, and unquestionable as self-evident propositions; yet, no one perhaps at this day, can rightly conceive the great merits of Locke's Treatises

on Education, and on Toleration, or the philosophical spirit of Montesquieu, and other works of this high order, which first diffused a tone of thinking over Europe. The principles have become so incorporated with our judgment, and so interwoven with our feelings, that we can scarcely now imagine the fervour they excited at the time, or the magnanimity of their authors in the decision of their opinions. Every first great monument of genius raises a new standard to our knowledge, from which the human mind takes its impulse and measures its advancement. The march of human thought, through ages might be indicated by every great work, as it is progressively succeeded by others. It stands like the golden milliary column in the midst of Rome, from which all others reckoned their distances.

But a scene of less grandeur, yet more beautiful, is the view of the solitary author himself in his own study—so deeply occupied, that whatever passes before him never reaches his observation, while working more than twelve

hours every day, he still murmurs as the hour strikes; the volume still lies open, the page still importunes—"And whence all this business?" He has made a discovery for us! that never has there been any thing important in the active world, but what is reflected in the literary—books contain every thing, even the falsehoods and the crimes which have been only projected by men! This solitary man of genius is arranging the materials of instruction and curiosity from every country, and every age; he is striking out in the concussion of new light, a new order of ideas for his own times; he possesses secrets which men hide from their contemporaries, truths they dared not utter, facts they dared not discover. View him in the stillness of meditation, his eager spirit busied over a copious page, and his eye sparkling with gladness. He has concluded what his countrymen will hereafter cherish as the legacy of genius—you see him now changed; and the restlessness of his soul is thrown into his very gestures—could you listen to the vaticinator!

But the next age only will quote his predictions. If he be the truly great author, he will be best comprehended by posterity, for the result of ten years of solitary meditation has often required a whole century to be understood and to be adopted. The ideas of Bishop Berkeley, in his "Theory of Vision," were condemned as a philosophical romance, and now form an essential part of every treatise of optics; and "the History of Oracles," by Fontenelle, says La Harpe, which in his youth was censured for its impiety, the centenarian lived to see regarded as a proof of his respect for religion.

"But what influence can this solitary man, this author of genius, have on his nation, when he has none in the very street in which he lives? and it may be suspected as little in his own house, whose inmates are hourly practising on the infantine simplicity which marks his character, and that frequent abstraction from what is passing under his own eyes?"

This solitary man of genius is stamping his own character on the minds of his own people. Take one instance, from others far more splendid, in the contrast presented by Franklin and Sir William Jones. The parsimonious habits, the money-getting precepts, the wary cunning, the little scruple about means, the fixed intent upon the end, of Dr. FRANKLIN, imprinted themselves on his Americans. Loftier feelings could not elevate a man of genius, who became the founder of a trading people, and who retained the early habits of a journeyman; while the elegant tastes of Sir WILLIAM JONES could inspire the servants of a commercial corporation to open new and vast sources of knowledge. A mere company of merchants, influenced by the literary character, enlarges the stores of the imagination, and provides fresh materials for the history of human nature.

FRANKLIN, with that calm good sense which is freed from the passion of imagination, has

himself declared this important truth relating to the literary character. "I have always thought that one man of tolerable abilities may work great changes and accomplish great affairs among mankind, if he first forms a good plan; and cutting off all amusements or other employments that would divert his attention, makes the execution of that same plan his sole study and business." Fontenelle was of the same opinion, for he remarks, that "a single great man is sufficient to accomplish a change in the taste of his age." The life of GRANVILLE SHARP, elaborately composed by Mr. Prince Hoare, is among the most striking illustrations of the solitary force of individual character.

It cannot be doubted, that the great author, in the solitude of his study, has often created an epoch in the annals of mankind. A single man of genius arose in a barbarous period in Italy, who gave birth not only to Italian, but to European literature. Poet, orator, philosopher, geographer, historian, and antiquary,

PETRARCH kindled a line of light through his native land, while a crowd of followers hailed their father-genius, who had stamped his character on the age. DESCARTES, it has been observed, accomplished a change in the taste of his age by the perspicacity and method for which he was indebted to his mathematical researches; and "models of metaphysical analysis and logical discussions" in the works of HUME and SMITH have had the same influence in the writings of our own time.

Even genius not of the same colossal size may aspire to add to the progressive mass of human improvement by its own single effort. When an author writes on a national subject, he awakens all the knowledge which slumbers in a nation, and calls around him, as it were, every man of talents; and though his own fame may be eclipsed by his successors, yet the emanation, the morning light broke from his solitary study. Our naturalist RAY, though no man was more modest in his claims, delighted to tell

a friend, that "Since the publication of his catalogue of Cambridge plants, many were prompted to botanical studies, and to herbalise in their walks in the fields." Johnson has observed, that "An emulation of study was raised by CHEKE and SMITH, to which even the present age perhaps owes many advantages, without remembering or knowing its benefactors." ROLLIN is only a compiler of history, and to the antiquary he is nothing! But races yet unborn will be enchanted by that excellent man, in whose works "the heart speaks to the heart," and whom Montesquieu called "The Bee of France" The Bacons, the Newtons, and the Leibnitzes were insulated by their own creative powers, and stood apart from the world, till the dispersers of knowledge became their interpreters to the people, opening a communication between two spots, which, though close to each other, were long separated —the closet and the world! The ADDISONS, the FONTENELLES, and the FEYJOOS, the first popular authors in their nations, who taught

England, France, and Spain to become a reading people, made virtue and knowledge contagious, while their fugitive page imbues with intellectual sweetness every uncultivated mind, like the perfumed mould taken up by the Persian swimmer. It was but a piece of common earth, but so delicate was its fragrance, that he who found it, in astonishment asked whether it were musk or amber? "I am nothing but earth; but roses were planted in my soil, and their odorous virtues have deliciously penetrated through all my pores: I have retained the infusion of sweetness, otherwise I had been but a lump of earth!"

I have said that authors produce their usefulness in privacy, and that their good is not of immediate application, and often unvalued by their own generation. On this occasion the name of EVELYN always occurs to me. This author supplied the public with nearly thirty works, at a time when taste and curiosity were not yet domiciliated in our country; his patriotism warmed beyond the eightieth year of his age,

and in his dying hand he held another legacy for his nation. EVELYN conveys a pleasing idea of his own works and their design. He first taught his countrymen how to plant, then to to build; and having taught them to be useful *without doors*, he then attempted to divert and occupy them *within doors*, by his treatises on chalcography, painting, medals, libraries. It was during the days of destruction and devastation both of woods and buildings, the civil wars of Charles the First, that a solitary author was projecting to make the nation delight in repairing their evil, by inspiring them with the love of agriculture and architecture. Whether his enthusiasm was introducing to us a taste for medals and prints, or intent on purifying the city from smoke and nuisances, and sweetening it by plantations of native plants, after having enriched our orchards and our gardens, placed summer-ices on our tables, and varied even the salads of our country; furnishing "a Gardener's Kalendar," which, as Cowley said, was to last as long "as months and

years;" whether the philosopher of the Royal Society, or the lighter satirist of the toilette, or the fine moralist for active as well as contemplative life—in all these changes of a studious life, the better part of his history has not yet been told. While Britain retains her awful situation among the nations of Europe, the "Sylva" of EVELYN will endure with her triumphant oaks. In the third edition of that work the heart of the patriot expands at its result: he tells Charles II. "how many millions of timber trees, besides infinite others, have been propagated and planted *at the instigation, and by the sole direction of this work.*" It was an author in his studious retreat, who casting a prophetic eye on the age we live in, secured the late victories of our naval sovereignty. Inquire at the Admiralty how the fleets of Nelson have been constructed, and they can tell you that it was with the oaks which the genius of EVELYN planted.*

* Since this was first printed, the *Diary* of EVELYN has appeared; and although it could not add to his

The same character existed in France, where DE SERRES in 1599 composed a work on the cultivation of mulberry trees, in reference to the art of raising silk-worms. He taught his fellow-citizens to convert a leaf into silk, and silk to become the representative of gold. Our author encountered the hostility of the prejudices of his times, even from Sully, in giving his country one of her staple commodities; but I lately received a medal recently struck in honour of DE SERRES by the Agricultural Society of the department of the Seine. We are too slow in commemorating the genius of our own country, and our men of genius are still defrauded of the debt we are daily incurring of their posthumous fame. Let monuments be raised, and let medals be struck! They are sparks of glory which you scatter through the next age!

general character, yet I was not too sanguine in my anticipations of the diary of so perfect a literary character, who has shown how his studies were intermingled with the business of life.

There is a singleness and unity in the pursuits of genius which is carried on through all ages, and will for ever connect the nations of the earth. The immortality of thought exists for man! The veracity of HERODOTUS, after more than two thousand years, is now receiving a fresh confirmation. The single and precious idea of genius, however obscure, is eventually disclosed; for original discoveries have usually been the developements of former knowledge. The system of the circulation of the blood appears to have been obscurely conjectured by SERVETUS, who wanted experimental facts to support his hypothesis; VESALIUS had an imperfect perception of the right motion of the blood: CÆSALPINUS admits a circulation without comprehending its consequences; at length our HARVEY, by patient meditation and penetrating sagacity, removed the errors of his predecessors, and demonstrated the true system. Thus, too, HARTLEY expanded the hint of "the association of ideas" from LOCKE, and raised a system on what LOCKE had only used

for an incidental illustration. The beautiful theory of vision by BERKELEY, was taken up by him just where LOCKE had dropped it; and as Professor Dugald Stewart describes, by following out his principles to their remoter consequences, BERKELEY brought out a doctrine which was as true as it seemed novel. LYDGATE's "fall of Princes," says Mr. Campbell, "probably suggested to Lord SACKVILLE the idea of his 'Mirror for Magistrates.'" The Mirror for Magistrates again gave hints to SPENSER in allegory, and may also "have possibly suggested to SHAKESPEARE the idea of his historical plays." When indeed we find that that great original, HOGARTH, adopted the idea of his "Idle and Industrious Apprentice" from the old comedy of "Eastward Hoe," we easily conceive that some of the most original inventions of genius, whether the more profound or the more agreeable, may thus be tracked in the snow of time.

In the history of genius therefore there is no chronology, for to its votaries every thing it

has done is PRESENT—the earliest attempt stands connected with the most recent. This continuity of ideas characterises the human mind, and seems to yield an anticipation of its immortal nature.

There is a consanguinity in the characters of men of genius, and a genealogy may be traced among their races. Men of genius in their different classes, living at distinct periods, or in remote countries, seem to reappear under another name; and in this manner there exists in the literary character an eternal transmigration. In the great march of the human intellect the same individual spirit seems still occupying the same place, and is still carrying on, with the same powers, his great work through a line of centuries. It was on this principle that one great poet has recently hailed his brother as "The ARIOSTO of the North," and ARIOSTO as "The SCOTT of the South." And can we deny the real existence of the genealogy of genius? Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton! this is a single line of descent!

ARISTOTLE, HOBBES, and LOCKE, DESCARTES and NEWTON, approximate more than we imagine. The same chain of intellect which ARISTOTLE holds, through the intervals of time, is held by them; and links will only be added by their successors. The naturalists, PLINY, GESNER, ALDROVANDUS, and BUFFON, derive differences in their characters, from the spirit of the times; but each, only made an accession to the family estate, while he was the legitimate representative of the family of the naturalists. ARISTOPHANES, MOLIÈRE, and FOOTE, are brothers of the family of national wits: the wit of Aristophanes was a part of the common property, and Molière and Foote were Aristophanic. PLUTARCH, LA MOTHE LE VAYER, and BAYLE, alike busied in amassing the materials of human thought and human action, with the same vigorous and vagrant curiosity, must have had the same habits of life. If Plutarch were credulous, La Mothe le Vayer sceptical, and Bayle philosophical, all that can be said is, that though the heirs of the family may differ in

their dispositions, no one will arraign the integrity of the lineal descent. VARRO did for the Romans what PAUSANIAS had done for the Greeks, and MONTFAUCON for the French, and CAMDEN for ourselves.

My learned and reflecting friend, whose original researches have enriched our national history, has this observation on the character of WICKLIFFE:—"To complete our idea of the importance of Wickliffe, it is only necessary to add, that as his writings made John Huss the reformer of Bohemia, so the writings of John Huss led Martin Luther to be the reformer of Germany; so extensive and so incalculable are the consequences which sometimes follow from human actions."* Our historian has accompanied this by giving the very feelings of Luther in early life on his first perusal of the works of John Huss: we see the spark of creation caught at the moment: a striking influence of the generation of character! Thus a

* Turner's History of England, vol. ii. p. 432.

Shortly will be Published, in 8vo.

COMMENTARIES

ON THE

LIFE AND REIGN OF CHARLES THE FIRST,

KING OF ENGLAND.

BY I. D'ISRAELI.

00097870

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 January, 2016